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Provisional

President:	Mr. Türk	(Slovenia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Fonseca
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Essonghe
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Holbrooke

Agenda

Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Croatia, Egypt, Finland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Japan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, South Africa, the Sudan, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and Zambia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Wensley (Australia), Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. Sychov (Belarus), Mr. Šimonović (Croatia), Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt), Ms. Korpi (Finland), Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Hasan (Iraq), Mr. Satoh (Japan), Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahirya), Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein), Mr. Powles (New Zealand), Mr. Apata (Nigeria), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Haque (Pakistan), Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea), Mr. Ka (Senegal), Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine), Mr. Samhan Al-Nuaimi (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. Kasanda (Zambia) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I now call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am delighted to take part in this vital meeting on one of the greatest challenges facing the United Nations, and one that, since the beginning of my role as Secretary-General, I have made a priority of my work: preventing armed conflict.

It is clear that prevention is one of the main tasks of this Organization. And yet, far too often, we find ourselves dealing with the effects of conflict rather than its roots. As I wrote in the introduction to this year's annual report on the work of the Organization, we need to move "from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention". *(A/54/l, para.61)*

The case for prevention hardly needs restating. Quite simply, it is cost-effective, in financial as well as human terms.

Most people now recognize this as a general proposition. But in a particular case, cogent arguments for refusing or delaying preventive action can always be found.

Those directly involved may be unwilling to see the danger, or may resent interference from outsiders. This is especially likely to be true of States threatened with internal conflict. In some cases, one or more of the parties may actually believe that conflict will serve its interests.

Outsiders, for their part, may well believe that the proposed action is unnecessary, or indeed that it will make matters worse. Thus, as Hamlet put it,

> "... the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action." *(Hamlet, Act III, scene I)*

That is what we mean when we say that the crucial element of political will is lacking.

There is no substitute for the recognition by the parties themselves that their actions are moving towards conflict, and that preventive action is needed. But there are ways in which we, as an Organization, could and should do more to make that clear to them.

Over the past two years, I have tried to strengthen our capacity for preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament, preventive deployment and both pre-conflict and post-conflict peace-building.

In particular, we are seeking to improve our early warning and analysis capabilities; improve coordination between the various departments, funds and agencies and intensify our cooperation with Governments as well as with regional organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Our efforts, however, will fall short unless they are complemented by a renewed commitment to effective prevention on the part of the Council and of all Member States. I hope the Council will use this meeting to examine how it can make prevention a tangible part of its day-to-day work.

Among the steps which the Council could take are the following: greater use of fact-finding missions, either by the Secretary-General or by the Council itself, at much earlier stages of a dispute — in accordance with the Council's Charter responsibility to "investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute" and "endanger the maintenance of international peace and security"; encouraging States which become aware of potential conflict within or among their neighbours to bring the issue promptly to the Council's attention; giving urgent attention to the problems of States which suffer acute economic, environmental and security strains, with consequent risks to their internal stability, because they are hosting large refugee populations from neighbouring countries — Guinea, with 500,000 refugees currently in its territory from Liberia and Sierra Leone, would be a strong candidate for such attention in the immediate future; establishing an informal working group, or a subsidiary organ, to study early warning and prevention issues and report back; and instituting regular meetings on prevention, at which the Council would identify areas that will require urgent preventive action.

Finally, the United Nations needs to address the issue of resources. Cost-effective preventive action is not cost-free, yet, regrettably, there is an endemic paucity of resources for it.

I think we all realize that operational preventive measures such as I have just outlined, while they must always be tried, will often be too late to make much difference. In the longer term it is even more important to address the deep-rooted causes of conflicts, which often lie in the social and economic sphere. Poverty, repression and undemocratic government, endemic underdevelopment, weak or non-existent institutions, political and economic discrimination between ethnic or religious communities: these are the long-term causes of many conflicts.

The past decade has provided ample evidence that when dissent and differences are channelled through peaceful means conflict can be avoided. But when they are met with repression and violence they grow stronger, more powerful and more violent. Ultimately, therefore, it is the responsibility of each and every Member State to prevent conflict by practising good governance.

It is Member States that must resolve internal differences peacefully and through negotiations. It is they that must allow dissent, establish the rule of law, protect the rights of minorities and ensure that elections are free and fair. It is they that must adopt enlightened economic and social policies that do not allow any group of the population to feel they are systematically excluded from their share of the country's wealth or denied any say in decisions affecting their lives.

While war is the worst enemy of development, healthy and balanced development is the best form of long-term conflict prevention. If any of those present recognize that statement, it is because I said it last month in an address to the staff of the World Bank. That was, I believe, an appropriate forum in which to broach that subject.

For all its awesome authority, the Council alone cannot help Member States to remove the long-term causes of conflict. Many of these fall within the terms of reference of other parts of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic and Social Council and even the International Court of Justice.

Effective action will often require joint action by many different organs and agencies, just as it requires joint action by different government departments within Member States. These different agencies often have separate agendas, and in the past have not been used to thinking — let alone working — together. This is now improving, but there is still scope for much closer coordination of policy among them, and also, in many cases, between them and non-governmental organizations or the private sector.

The Council may wish to take the initiative in organizing discussion of the many and complex issues involved at the highest level, perhaps at a meeting to be held during next year's Millennium Summit.

Allow me to conclude with one final thought.

In the domestic affairs of our Member States, conflict prevention is usually described as the maintenance of order. A key role in maintaining order is played by deterrence. Citizens are deterred from disturbing the peace by the knowledge that if they do so they are liable to be arrested and brought before a court. I believe deterrence also has an important role to play in maintaining international order. On the individual level, we are seeking to do that through the Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. And I hope that before long we shall be able to do it worldwide through the International Criminal Court.

But it is perhaps even more important to do it on the collective level — and that is where the Council has its gravest responsibility.

I really believe that, thanks to the prompt and effective decisions taken by the Council in 1990 and 1991, States all over the world are today in less danger of being treated as Kuwait was then. But we have also observed that these days many of the gravest conflicts which come to require the attention of the Council year after year occur not between States, but within them. That is why in my address to the General Assembly two months ago I appealed for a new consensus on intervention, defined in the broadest sense. In that address I noted that armed intervention is itself a result of the failure of prevention, and I stressed the value of deterrence in preventing conflict. Let me repeat, then, that nothing would be more effective in deterring States and other parties from resorting to the extreme measures that characterize too many present-day conflicts than a clear demonstration that the Council is indeed prepared to take decisive action when faced with crimes against humanity.

It is my hope that this meeting today will help the United Nations forge a consensus on these vital questions and restore prevention to its rightful place as the first responsibility of the Security Council and of the Organization as a whole.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I wish to add, Mr. Secretary-General, that your statement, your ideas and your proposals will certainly be an important source of inspiration for the Security Council in its future work.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): Thank you, Mr. President, for calling this public meeting on such an important subject.

I want to express my appreciation, as the month draws to an end, to you, Mr. President, and your whole delegation for your outstanding work — not only in making today's meeting possible, but in giving it a symbolic reality by the earlier meeting with the Joint Presidency of Bosnia, which illustrates precisely the role the Security Council can and should play in conflict resolution and prevention. That historic meeting, resulting in the Declaration of New York, has already produced benefits in Bosnia, and illustrates in specific terms what we are trying to talk about in general terms here today.

I also want to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and all that he has done personally to strengthen the Security Council's role in preventing armed conflict and dealing with its consequences.

The United States is pleased that the United Nations and regional and other international groups have decided to make conflict prevention a priority. We support these efforts.

Before continuing, I would like to take this occasion — with your permission, Mr. President — to introduce an individual, seated behind me to my right, of enormous importance to our efforts: Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee, the Chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Frist is not only an outstanding member of the Congress and a member of the majority party who has given so much of his time to issues concerning Africa, but he is also a pioneer in open-heart surgery and heart transplants. Indeed, he performed the first heart-lung transplant in the United States.

I am not saying that because I think anyone in the room might need this in the next hour, but, just in case, I wanted all present to know that we will be more secure as long as Senator Frist is with us.

As members know, I am leaving tomorrow for Africa with Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice and with the ranking minority member in that Committee, Senator Feingold of Wisconsin. Because Senator Frisk could not make that trip with us, but to illustrate the bipartisan importance we attach to Africa, he is spending two days with us and has met already with many of the Permanent Representatives here and with other members of the United Nations. I thank him for joining us today as a symbol — and I stress this — of the importance that both branches and both parties attach to Africa.

Although the United Nations Charter clearly delineates the respective role of United Nations organs in preventing conflict, today's meeting provides us with a unique opportunity to discuss the issue in more depth. I have just returned from East Timor, where the Security Council's actions helped stem a brutal conflict but could not prevent it over the last 22 years. Tomorrow my trip will begin to several African countries, including Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While there, I will have the opportunity to assess the United Nations work regarding conflict prevention as well as other important efforts.

I have just returned, over the weekend, from Indonesia and East Timor, and with your permission, Mr. President, I would like to give you a quick situation report on that area, because I think it is illustrative again, like Bosnia, of how the United Nations can contribute to an area. It is clear that in the month of September the Security Council actions broke the back of a tragedy of over 20 years and opened the door for a peaceful resolution of that problem.

In my trip to East Timor I saw evidence of the success of the United Nations effort. First, I can report to you, Mr. Secretary-General, that your personal selection as Special Representative in East Timor, Sergio Vieira de Mello, is doing a magnificent job with his understaffed and overwhelmed team. They are deep into the planning for transition to what will be the first new country of the twenty-first century, and they are working effectively with all sides.

I also want to single out the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) forces, under the command of General Cosgrove of Australia, which have brought stability to the region. We met at the border between West Timor and East Timor to discuss opening the border for refugee flow, and effected the first meeting between the Indonesian military, the Australian leadership and the Commander of the guerrilla forces at that border. That was well reported by the media.

In East Timor I can report some impressive and hopeful signs of progress among the debris of a city needlessly torn apart by war. I cannot, however, give as optimistic or upbeat a report about the situation in the refugee camps in West Timor. Over 100,000 East Timorese are still in those camps, being fed misinformation and inaccurate stories by the militia and therefore are afraid to return.

Money spent in those camps by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would be better spent resettling those people in East Timor or, if they are legitimately unwilling to go home, to encourage Indonesia to resettle them in Indonesia, which the Government has promised but has not yet done, preferably by transmigrating them off West Timor.

I regret to say that there has been a massive public information failure on the part of the refugee effort in West Timor. There has been no effective effort to counter the propaganda that is being spread. I mention this in a meeting on the issue we are here to discuss for a simple reason: we can talk generalities as long as we want, but here is a specific example of where the United Nations is performing magnificently in East Timor, but, I regret to say, has not yet done what it needs to do in West Timor. We have worked closely with them, we tape-recorded messages by Bishop Belo and Xanana Gusmão, which are now being distributed in the camps, and I urge everyone involved in this situation to work hard to get those camps open. Those people should not remain in those camps, otherwise all the good words spoken in this meeting today will be meaningless in an area of the world where the United Nations has undertaken massive responsibilities.

These challenges, like those in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and many other war-torn places, remind us how common war and violence remain. As we approach the question of how to prevent armed conflict, we must be clear on the distinction between its causes and its consequences. Much of what United Nations agencies such as the UNHCR do is to deal with the consequences, as do most of the non-governmental organizations. The Security Council deals both with consequences and, I would hope, increasingly would address conflict prevention by dealing with the causes. In East Timor, this took over 20 years. In Bosnia, the United Nations did not succeed, and it had to turn the process over to other organizations.

It is our responsibility to address the underlying causes of conflict. The international record has been less than exemplary. I would, however, commend the Secretary-General for the brave and courageous report on Srebrenica, which illustrates both the tragedy and the leadership of the United Nations, and its willingness to deal honestly with what happened there.

Rwanda as well deserves to get similar examination, as another recent tragedy where we could have, and should have, done much more, much earlier, to prevent the conflict and the horrendous bloodshed that followed.

Ultimately, government leaders must answer for their actions. Those of us who have the ability to prevent conflicts have a moral, political and indeed at times a strategic obligation to do so. The risks and dangers of acting do not justify simply doing nothing. Therefore, we must focus on the tools needed to mitigate tensions and commit ourselves to early, preventive action.

Above all, we need a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention. The promotion of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, equal economic opportunity and market-based economic systems provides the surest path to long-term global stability and development.

We have seen over the weekend a dramatic step forward in the longstanding, ancient quarrels in Ireland under this kind of patient, careful negotiations, encouraged and stimulated in this case by my friend and colleague George Mitchell.

Here at the United Nations, the Secretary-General plays an important role in identifying and mitigating potential conflicts. The United States continues to encourage him to intercede in deteriorating situations as soon he feels it is possible to do so and to keep the Security Council informed of his actions, his views and his recommendations.

The Security Council should also become more deeply engaged. The lessons of East Timor, and in particular Ambassador Andjaba's superb mission, in which he was accompanied by several other people here, was instrumental in coordinating the international response. The Security Council should not hesitate to deploy similar missions to other conflict situations, if we think they can make a difference. And I would point out that when Ambassador Andjaba's mission took off, no one thought it would do as well as it did. And that leads me to make a rather fundamental point, which is that sometimes one must take chances to achieve peace, as my friend Mr. Andjaba and his colleagues did two months ago. Having seen East Timor today, I can say that he can be proud of what he started.

Both the complexity and volume of recent crises demonstrate the need for coordinated and broader responses. The United Nations cannot simply act alone. To maximize effectiveness, we should augment existing efforts.

First, regional and subregional organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe have successfully addressed local crises before they escalated into conflict. Better coordination with the United Nations will only strengthen the capabilities of these groups.

Secondly, international development and financial institutions are playing a growing role in the planning and implementation of conflict prevention activities. The United Nations should inform the international financial institutions of potential crisis situations so that they can respond appropriately.

Thirdly, we should work together to enhance the capability of the United Nations to recruit, train and deploy international civilian police. Anyone here who has been in Bosnia or Kosovo knows that no issue is more important to the future success of those missions. The same will be true in East Timor.

Equally important is the need for effective measures to combat the illicit trade in commodities — such as small arms and, especially in Africa, diamonds — that helps to prolong these conflicts and that is cynically promoted by regional warlords and local authorities. Without prejudice to the right of legitimate self-defence, we urge States to enact voluntary national moratoriums on the sale of small arms and light weapons to conflict areas. We invite our partners to work with us and with the diamond industry to develop a certification mechanism to combat the illegitimate trade in diamonds that has done so much to fuel and finance conflict, particularly in Africa.

To fulfil its purpose and historic promise, the United Nations must maintain a leading role in preventing wars and other tragedies. To this end, the United Nations must effectively tap into its expertise and its other resources, and dedicate them to conflict prevention. And to this end, the entire United Nations system, particularly the Member States, should support the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen and mobilize resources for conflict prevention activities. The United States will welcome a ministerial-level meeting on conflict prevention during next year's Millennium Assembly.

It is vital that the Security Council, the Secretariat and all United Nations Members play an active role in ongoing efforts to prevent international conflict. True, in many places, particularly places such as the Balkans or the Congo or Rwanda, it is tempting to argue that future conflict is inevitable, that things have to get worse before they can be resolved — and I do not deny the fact that this was true in East Timor, Bosnia and Kosovo. But I hope it is not always going to be the case. Here, I think particularly of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other areas in Africa, including Burundi.

Hatred often seems too deep, brutality too prevalent and the memories of injustice too raw, which leaves people with the feeling that nothing can be done. But we must not give in to the seduction of moral disgust, followed by neglect and then by empty posturing and hand-wringing.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your initiative to organize today's open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict is a most welcome and timely one. I wish also to thank the Secretary-General for having opened our discussion. His statement reflected his wise conception of his role and of the implementation of the Charter of the United Nations. It is the Charter that, in Article 99, gives the Secretary-General the power and the right to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. That role has sometimes been debated; the Secretary-General's use of Article 99 and of his powers in that sphere have at times been criticized — with respect, for example, to the Middle East or to Africa. I find it perfectly splendid that the Secretary-General is here today to demonstrate his interest in the President's initiative.

During September's general debate in the General Assembly and during the Assembly's debate on the report of the Security Council, many Member States emphasized the importance of conflict prevention and the need to make better use of existing resources and procedures. That appeal is justified by the simple observation that it is always more costly both financially and in human terms to put an end to an armed conflict than to prevent it from breaking out. Hence the interest in this debate, which was clearly highlighted by the previous speaker.

The Charter gives the Security Council a role in the prevention of armed conflict. Chapter VI, which relates to the pacific settlement of disputes, sets out the role the Council can play in assisting the parties, in determining whether the persistence of a dispute seems to threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, and in recommending procedures or methods of adjustment, or even what it deems as the appropriate terms of a settlement. Chapter VII deals with actions in the event of a threat to the peace. There, we are still in the preventive stage, and we can see that the Council has a range of resources that can go as far as the use of enforcement measures.

Yet the Security Council has encountered difficulties in playing its proper role in conflict prevention, and we should be fully aware of those difficulties. First of all, at a time that is powerfully influenced by the media, events leading to an armed conflict draw less attention than a conflict that is already under way. Unfortunately, news reports too often tend to define priorities. Moreover, preventive action often requires discretion and tenacity, virtues that are not well adapted to the constraints of an ultra-media-oriented world — about whose values a great deal has been said.

In this area as in many others, good judgement is required. Sometimes it can be useful for the Security Council to deal openly and publicly with an issue so as to mobilize attention and to put pressure on the parties. That was certainly the effect of the Security Council mission to Jakarta and Dili, sent on the initiative of Ambassador van Walsum and led by Ambassador Anjaba in the outstanding manner that has already been noted. That mission made international intervention possible in East Timor before the situation was beyond repair. That was an example of the value of preventive Security Council action carried out publicly.

But in other cases it can be preferable to act with discretion. While we understand the mounting wish for increased transparency in the Council's activities, we must also be able to make use of discrete ways and means to settle a matter satisfactorily, and of the advantages offered by informal consultations among Council members or other procedures that can make possible direct, private dialogue with the parties concerned.

I shall mention only one example of this, and indeed one in which the Council was not directly involved: the decisive action by the former Secretary-General in the settlement of the dispute between Eritrea and Yemen over the Hanish islands. From the initial steps by the former Secretary-General to the decision by a court of arbitration, this required long months of delicate negotiations carried out with absolute discretion. Indeed, my country played a role in that peaceful settlement, but sought no public advantage from this. That is an example of how discretion is sometimes necessary and how we should value it, however much we may regret the absence of the media's cameras and flashbulbs.

Furthermore, most current conflicts are internal. Their prevention can therefore be seen as an infringement of the principle of State sovereignty. However, if action is not taken soon enough, an internal crisis can rapidly degenerate into an armed conflict which, in many cases, has international repercussions and can destabilize a whole region, provoking a flood of refugees, stimulating arms trafficking and drawing in outside players. We have to find, therefore, a balance between these apparently contradictory preoccupations in such a way that the Security Council can be called upon early enough to prevent a spiral of violence.

We should note in this respect that the text of the Charter, in legal terms, does not exclude the Council from debating an internal situation if, according to Article 34, "the continuance of the ... situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security" or, again, as in Article 39, if "the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace". It is perfectly possible in the Council to debate, under these Articles of the Charter, a situation within a State. However, one must not confuse debate with having recourse to force, which comes under other provisions that are precise and limiting. The Council can take up an issue and take preventive measures without necessarily envisaging the use of force.

This was done in the spring of 1998 in the case of Kosovo. The Council debated, preoccupied by a degradation during several months of the situation on the ground marked both by an intensification of repression by Yugoslav forces and by activities of the guerrillas of the UCK, and the Council adopted resolution 1160 (1998). This resolution included several demands addressed to the parties to put an end to violence and terrorism and to engage in a real dialogue, and coercive measures, in particular an arms embargo aimed at putting pressure on the parties and depriving them of the means of intensifying the fighting. The events which followed, unfortunately, showed that only even stronger action on the part of the international community could prevent the conflict from getting worse.

This leads me to the third difficulty, which consists of taking adequate measures, in time, to confront a situation and give oneself the means to desired ends. Is not the Council reproached too often for doing too little too late? Retrospectively, it would have been necessary in Kosovo to intervene earlier and more forcefully.

In what was formerly Zaire, in the autumn of 1996, the Security Council, after having authorised deployment of a multinational defense force to allow the sending of humanitarian aide to hundreds of thousands of refugees, estimated too quickly that the situation was returning to normal and no longer justified such intervention. We now know well that such was not the case. Because of the Council's hesitation in intervening in time and adequately, not only did tens of thousands of people die, but the causes of future problems remained; one year later these brought about a much greater conflict which we now find difficult to resolve. This highlights the importance of making an effort to solve problems tied to implementation of the Lusaka Agreement with all the determination and the all the honesty necessary, and that should one not play around with words. One should realize that it is necessary to provide the resources, financial and undoubtedly the human resources, and that, indeed, right now the means should be provided to make these decisions without any more slipping between words and reality.

Practically, that means two things: on the one hand, having the courage and the political will to act while it is still not too late; on the other hand — and this is not limited to preventive actions — watching to ensure an appropriate balance of means to ends and provide the necessary human, financial and material resources. On this subject, when it involves preventing an armed conflict — which I believe is the subject of today's debate — the financial aspect, as important as it is, should become neither a constraint nor a pre-condition for action by the Security Council.

Fortunately, some examples show how the Council acted effectively in the past. We must not forget that, for example, with respect to the former Yugoslav Republic or Macedonia, the United Nations prevention force has been there from 1992 to 1999, the first example of the deployment of a force aimed at preventing conflicts and tensions in a region from overflowing into a neighbouring country. This must be credited to the United Nations, which has had successes as well in the Balkans.

We cannot, with respect to preventive action, isolate the role of the Security Council from the responsibilities and functions of other organs of the United Nations and, beyond that, from regional organizations and from Member States.

The Secretary-General, I have already said, has an extremely important role to play in alerting the Council to situations which seem to him susceptible of degenerating and in taking, in consultation with the Council, preventive diplomatic actions directly or indirectly through special envoys. Evidently, to accomplish such missions, the Secretary-General must be able to rely on expertise within the Secretariat, as well as on other means of information and early warning. Reinforcing the Secretariat's ability in this area is not, we believe, optional and must not rely essentially on voluntary contributions. This should not prevent countries from placing personnel at the disposal of the Secretariat for its benefit, without creating suspicion and excessive vigilance on the part of various members of the General Assembly.

Thus, the Secretary-General, in his report on Africa, has very justly said that the best prevention is through treating the underlying causes of conflicts, notably internal conflicts. That supposes that States, assisted by donors and international organizations, ensure sustainable development, being attentive to social redistribution, watching over good governance, power sharing, democratization, respect for human rights and protection of minorities. This highlights our sense of the need for directions currently taken by the United Nations Development Programme, based on this concept of good governance, that we would like to see involve respect for human rights, proper justice and protection of minorities. These areas are various and related.

Growing attention is rightly being given to the problem of excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and illegal trafficking in light weapons and small arms. These weapons, of which 500 million are in circulation throughout the world, have been the principal instrument of killing occasioned by conflicts of the post-cold war period. They are responsible for 90 per cent of the deaths caused by these conflicts. The struggle against their accumulation and trafficking constitutes the prime example of a preventable situation. It is appropriate here to recall the conference scheduled in 2001 on the illegal trafficking in small arms at which France has the intention to propose negotiation of an instrument making obligatory the marking of these arms.

It is also worth commending again, as we have done in other circumstances, the initiative of Mali, now a project of the Economic Community of West African States for a moratorium on importing, exporting and manufacturing light weapons in West Africa.

In the same spirit, programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants have both curative and preventive sides. The Council must continue to encourage such measures. But these will only have a limited scope if they are not completed by actions in other spheres related to the careful reintegration of ex-combatants. Reduction of the number of armed men presupposes that the economy offers real prospects of reinsertion. This underlines the necessity of continuing to support official development assistance for the least developed countries.

Regional organizations also have an essential role to play. Their coordination and dialogue with the United Nations — the Security Council in particular — must be strengthened. More frequent contacts between the Security Council and the leaders of the regional and subregional organizations would provide useful opportunities to exchange information and examine situations in which preventive action might be necessary and the involvement of the Security Council desirable.

As can be seen, conflict prevention is an area in which we could do more and be more effective. France hopes that today's debate will both increase the level of resolve and stimulate imaginations. In this connection, the presidential statement that you, Mr. President, are to make on behalf of the Council at the end of this open debate reviews the Council's means and capacities for carrying out its conflict-prevention mandate. It will be useful to review them, but it is even more important to keep them in mind when we examine specific situations, as we do on a daily basis.

The President: I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me and my delegation.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The holding of an open debate on the "Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict" is highly timely. There is an urgent need to adapt to the new security environment, since today security is taken to mean more than arms regulation and disarmament. The concept of security is broader and more qualitative. For this reason the organs of the United Nations, with the goal of protecting human beings, are adapting to meet the challenges this changing reality presents.

The starting point is democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance and development.

The international transformations resulting from globalization have in the last decade offered new opportunities. But globalization also means shared risks, border conflicts, migratory movements, refugees, organized crime, ecological damage, and the rapid spread of technologies capable of creating weapons of mass destruction — to mention but a few problems.

It would be impossible for each individual State to confront these challenges unilaterally. There is a need for cooperative security policies that strengthen the security of all.

We must simultaneously confront the immediate, root causes of conflicts, most of which in stem from lack of economic opportunities and social inequalities.

It is timely to recall that in parallel with this debate that is taking place in Seattle a meeting of the World Trade Organization. The Secretary-General, in his article today in *The Wall Street Journal*, and in his comments just a few minutes ago, states:

> "Practical experience has shown that trade and investment often bring not only economic development but higher standards of human rights and environmental protection as well."

In other words, the possibility of access to markets for the developing countries will be to the benefit of all, since it will lead to a reduction in the need for assistance. Trade is less onerous than aid.

As the Secretary-General rightly stated in his report on the work of the Organization,

> "The main short- and medium-term strategies for preventing non-violent conflicts from escalating into war, and preventing earlier wars from erupting again, are preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament." *(A/54/1, para. 36)*

Likewise, as was already established in 1992 in "An Agenda for Peace", preventive measures must be based on timely and precise knowledge of the facts. There is a need for understanding based on a correct analysis of global events and trends. It is also essential to have the political will to accomplish this. The power to adopt preventive measures in accordance with the Charter resides mainly in the Security Council. This is where the political will must be created.

The Charter provides a series of measures whose timely use can resolve situations of potential danger: for example, prompt investigation, in accordance with Article 34; conflict assessment; where necessary, the application of the measures provided for in Chapter VII that do not involve the use of force; and the possible use of this last resort.

In this respect, the Security Council should explore and increase its use of all of the resources of preventive diplomacy. Among these it is worth mentioning the Security Council mission to Jakarta and Dili last September, led by Ambassador Andjaba of Namibia, which proved to be an effective means of dealing with a crisis situation.

The Secretary-General is also clearly contributing to this endeavour. We view as essential the current smooth collaboration between the Secretary-General and the Council for early detection of situations that may develop into a threat to peace and security, so that the Council can take appropriate measures in time.

We would also like to emphasize the role that can be played by the International Tribunals in creating awareness that impunity will no longer be tolerated. This role will be enhanced when the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court enters into force.

The regional organizations are also called upon to play their role; it can be extremely useful to coordinate their efforts with those of the United Nations. Proof of this can be found in the initiatives of the various regional organizations in Latin America, Africa and Europe.

In conclusion, we must ensure that in the realm of international security in the coming decades the interests of collective security prevail over national, regional and sectoral interests. Only in this way will it be possible to avoid conflict and maintain a stable and lasting peace.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by commending you, Mr. President, for having organized today's debate on the Security Council's role in conflict prevention. Canada is a firm supporter of such initiatives, which enable the Council to consider multidisciplinary quotations concerning security and the Council's mandate in an open, transparent and comprehensive manner. The subject on which you have focused our attention today is of pressing relevance to the Security Council. A quick glance at the Council's day-to-day agenda unfortunately reveals the reality of the Council's reactive approach to conflict. The results of the Council's deliberations and of the action it mandates on the ground tell of the challenges of reversing, controlling or resolving conflict once it has broken out. The risks and costs, both human and financial, of this approach must lead us to a re-evaluation of how the Council works, how its mandate is interpreted and how it uses the tools at its disposal.

Canada has consistently called for greater Council activism on conflict prevention. We fully support the Secretary-General's appeal to the Council to embrace a culture of prevention. As he so eloquently noted, even the most costly policy of conflict prevention is far cheaper in lives and resources than measures taken under the prevailing culture of reaction. How, in practical terms, can the Council adopt a culture of prevention and take action accordingly? Canada would argue that the Council has all the basic tools it needs. What it lacks is the vision and, above all, the will and commitment necessary to use them flexibly and creatively.

Nothing in the Council's Charter mandate precludes it from taking preventive action in the pursuit of international peace and security. Taking such action would, of course, require the Council to embrace a broader definition of security; taking into account the multiple factors that contribute to a conflict and thus suppressing it in its earliest stages and manifestations. That would mean focusing not only on aggression between States, but also on such intrastate security issues as gross and systematic human rights abuse or catastrophic humanitarian emergencies, utter failures of governance and the rule of law, and gross instances of economic deprivation. In short, it would mean paying greater attention to threats to human security which, as recent experience has shown, have been key sources of conflict in the post-cold-war era. Responding to such threats early and effectively requires a political decision by the Council which, after all, has the discretionary power to determine what constitutes a threat to peace and security. Early preventive action by the Council, whether persuasive or coercive, would help to pre-empt both the emergence and the escalation of conflict, thus providing an important deterrent effect.

There are important precedents of Council action to build on. The United Nations first preventive military deployment — the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force — helped to prevent the spread of conflict in a region racked by strife. The Council should consider deploying more preventive missions, both military and civilian, drawing on this experience and that of recent post-conflict operations which play important preventive roles.

Another innovative and progressive step was the creation of international criminal tribunals. They are an important signal from the Council that gross and systematic human rights abuses within States merit a robust response by the international community and that such abuses will not be allowed to stand. The tribunals, and eventually the International Criminal Court, can thus provide a deterrent to would-be violators by demonstrating that they will be held accountable for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The tribunals also play an important norm-reinforcing role. Until the International Criminal Court is established, we hope that the precedent set by the tribunals will be followed in other situations that call for them.

(*spoke in English*)

The Council is served by the Office of the Secretary-General with the ability to mediate, investigate disputes, promote dialogue, send peace envoys and, above all, bring matters which he deems threats to security to the Council's attention. The Council should take full advantage of this preventive capacity by backing the Secretary-General in these efforts and ensuring that he has the necessary resources and political support to conduct them effectively. More importantly, the Council needs to take appropriate action in response to his advice. The Council should also make greater use of the provisions for the peaceful settlement of disputes under Chapter VI of the Charter, in particular by launching its own investigations into potential conflicts and encouraging Member States to bring such matters to the Council's attention. The practice of dispatching delegations of Council members to conflict situations to bring the will and commitment of the Council home to actual or potential belligerents should also be used — but sparingly — as a preventive measure. Clearly, the use of a Council mission when circumstances suggest success to be unlikely would quickly devalue its currency.

The Council's procedures and working methods can have a decisive impact on the effectiveness of its efforts at preventing conflict, for they speak loudly to the matter of the Council's continuing credibility. For an institution dedicated to the pursuit of peace, the Council's procedural and constitutional complexities often seem to conspire against that goal. Under current working methods, the Council often fails to allow the effective participation of Member States whose vital interests are indeed at stake. Further, given the way it operates, it is too easy to exclude from the Council's agenda items inimical to the interests of one or more of its members.

Conflict prevention calls for broad and inclusive dialogue. If the Council is to be an effective tool of conflict prevention, it must adapt its conclave and privileged working methods to the new security environment by broadening its range of interlocutors and its sources of information. There should be more scope for the participation of non-members in the Council's deliberations, whether formal or informal, when their presence could make a useful contribution to the Council's efforts to prevent conflict. The Council should also explore more innovative formats to permit interaction with non-State actors who could contribute to the Council's efforts at conflict prevention.

In his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Secretary-General made a number of practical recommendations to the Council for preventing conflict. For example, he advocated greater responsiveness to the early-warning indicators of conflict by making use of human rights information and analysis from independent treaty body experts and the Commission on Human Rights, as well as reliable non-governmental sources. The challenge is not the availability of information, but bringing it to the Council's attention and taking appropriate action in response.

One approach might be to follow the practice used to keep the Council apprised of humanitarian issues and have regular briefings by special rapporteurs or, indeed, by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to set up expert working groups of the Council to monitor volatile situations and consider options to prevent the outbreak of violence. The Secretary-General also set out factors which should trigger action by the Security Council to protect civilians in the face of massive human rights abuse or humanitarian emergency. Acceptance of these factors by the Council in its consideration of specific security situations, backed by action when needed, would have a significant impact on conflict prevention.

Canada fully supports cooperation between the Council and regional and subregional security organizations in efforts to prevent conflict. The latter can play key roles in averting conflict because of their proximity to the issues and their intimate knowledge of the protagonists. There is, however, a continuing tendency for the Council to seek to devolve, or at least discuss the devolution of, its own security responsibilities to regional and subregional groups, often in the full knowledge that such groups or organizations are neither competent to assume nor capable of assuming such responsibilities. Even when such organizations can play a useful role, conflict prevention efforts conducted at the local or regional level frequently need the impetus that only the active engagement of this Council can provide. What is to be avoided at all costs is a situation where Council inaction creates a void which others, perhaps with inadequate resources and capacities, are abandoned to fill.

We will continue to be faced with situations in which our best efforts at conflict prevention fail. Over the years, we have developed instruments such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement and sanctions to respond in those circumstances. We believe that determined action to resolve and end conflicts, including those marked by humanitarian suffering or human rights abuse, can be an important deterrent against future conflicts. Renewed effort and, above all, adequate resources — financial and human — are a sine qua non to effective Council engagement. Unless the Council can count on the willingness of the general membership to provide the wherewithal to make the Council's effective engagement possible and practicable, all the fine theory is for naught. At the very least, we must immediately take steps to enhance the effectiveness of the instruments available in such cases, particularly the United Nations capacity to plan effectively and deploy rapidly. Peace support operations must also be given the necessary mandates and resources to prevent the resurgence of conflict. Finally, the Council should further explore the deterrent qualities of the instruments which have been traditionally employed during or in the aftermath of conflict. Canada strongly believes that if these interventions are used as preventive measures, their impact and efficacy will increase as their costs diminish. Surely, however, our political institutions have matured to the point where intelligent cost-benefit analysis requires us to invest in those ounces of prevention which, if successful, would avoid the full horror of not taking early action.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his kind words addressed to me.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Nations Charter is crystal clear about our first and most fundamental objective. It is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Any success which we, the Member States of the United Nations, have had in achieving that objective can only be regarded as partial. Too often Security Council intervention comes too late to prevent widespread death and destruction. Modern war and internal conflict remain a blight on our planet. It is civilians who bear the brunt.

Despite the efforts of this Council, too many belligerent groups target the innocent and the defenceless. Massive numbers of refugees are forced to flee for safety, and gross and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are perpetrated. To stop this increasingly vicious trend, we have to prevent disputes from escalating into armed warfare.

The presidential statement which you, Mr. President, will deliver at the end of this debate, sets out a comprehensive framework for our own activity. But it also recognizes the essential role of the Secretary-General. He must be given the support he needs to work for peace on his own initiative. That means building the capacity of the United Nations Secretariat. It must be able to produce sharper analyses of potential conflicts. We must also reinforce the ability of Department of Peacekeeping Operations to deploy rapidly United Nations peacekeepers, police and civilians if fragile peace agreements are not to disintegrate.

It also means a greater focus on conflict prevention in the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General must have the freedom to work up more creative approaches to preventive diplomacy. He must be allowed to carry them forward discreetly and under his own tactical judgement if they are to succeed.

As for the Member States, we too must play a stronger role, not least in Africa. We must help the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the other regional organizations take a more proactive role in conflict prevention. The OAU has recently published a plan for expanding the capacity of its conflict management centre. The United Kingdom has committed $1 million to support this, and we hope that others will contribute soon. In this whole area, the Security Council must work harder and show more initiative than others. It is a test of leadership and responsibility for this Council.

In 1999, we have done our best. We should be proud of the success of Ambassador Andjaba's mission to Jakarta and Dili in September. Ambassador Fowler should be congratulated on his ongoing work to tighten the enforcement of sanctions against UNITA. We have done well to address directly the fragile situation in Sierra Leone and to support the process of reconciliation there.

But apart from addressing each issue on its merits, we have to think creatively about acting on our best intentions and about the policy instruments at our disposal. The Secretary-General has this afternoon given us four practical points for early consideration. This debate is raising more. Most pertinent is the Secretary-General's point about the resources being more cost-effectively employed in prevention than in surgery.

So, overall, this amounts to an ambitious agenda for the new millennium. We will not succeed straightaway, and we will have to face up to the consequences of our occasional failures.

For a start, when the Security Council fails to prevent genocide and other massive abuses of human rights, others are encouraged to believe that they too can get away with crimes against humanity. The fact that so many of these conflicts are internal should not bar us from taking collective steps to resolve them. The Secretary-General set out this problem in his opening statement at this year's session of the General Assembly.

We will restore the United Nations to its rightful role in international peace and security only if we adapt to a world in which the sovereign State has already, as a matter of objective reality, been redefined by globalization, a world in which there is a new recognition that the State is the servant of the people, not the other way round.

The British Government firmly shares the Secretary-General's belief that we have a joint responsibility to act when confronted by genocide, mass displacement of people or major breaches of international humanitarian law. That does not necessarily mean the use of force. It may mean determined diplomacy, sometimes out of the glare of publicity when that would be more effective, sometimes more creative in its ideas and its implementation than has traditionally been the hallmark of the Council.

Preventive action can take many forms, and military action will not always be desirable or feasible. But when the international community does use force in response to humanitarian crises, it needs a framework for that response: a common understanding within the Security Council and the wider United Nations membership of the circumstances and conditions of action. Force should be used as a last resort. It must be limited in scope. It must be proportionate to the humanitarian objective of preventing major loss of civilian life.

We shall soon be sharing more detailed United Kingdom ideas on humanitarian action for discussion with our partners in the United Nations.

The subject we are discussing today goes far beyond the immediate remit of the Security Council. If the United Nations is to live up to its goals, the Council must work in concert with the Secretary-General, with the Funds, Programmes and Agencies and with the wider membership.

Today's debate should be the event which kick-starts our work in this whole area. We need to innovate, and we need to work together. With a shared commitment and a clear purpose, we will begin to make a difference.

Thank you, Sir, for initiating this useful debate.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China)(*spoke in Chinese*): According to the stipulations of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council shoulders the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It is the major institution that the international community relies on for settling conflicts and crises and realizing peace. Now with the prevention of armed conflict becoming an important means of settling disputes peacefully, it is only natural that the Council should bear major responsibilities in this area. Besides, there seems to be a tendency in the work of the Council nowadays to put much emphasis on intervention, while neglecting effective prevention.

All too often there is heated debate on intervention, indeed, even invocation of Chapter VII of the Charter, while neither the issue of prevention nor serious study into the root cause of conflicts is given adequate attention. The Chinese delegation has always believed that timely and effective preventive measures would get twice the result with half the effort, in that these measures not only help avoid loss of life or property but also save resources. We therefore appreciate that the President has chosen to have this open debate, which is both very timely and necessary.

There are various kinds of measures that can be taken to prevent armed conflicts, but there is one general principle by which all of them must abide — that is, actions must be taken in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. If we look back at the history of United Nations involvement in settling regional conflicts, we can very easily see that success has always been the natural result of adherence to the Charter, while contravention of Charter principles has only led to failure and setback.

Such is the case in settling regional conflicts, and it is also true in respect to prevention of armed conflict. From the perspective of the ultimate goal of preventive diplomacy, all Council actions should be aimed at resolving conflict peacefully, instead of exacerbating a conflict or touching off new ones.

In this connection, we are pleased to see that the Council has taken a series of positive measures, including sending fact-finding missions to conflict regions, holding more open debates on specific issues and continuing to put Article 99 of the Charter into practice by encouraging the Secretary-General to play his due role. All these commendable practices have, in one way or another, enriched the Council's experience in handling issues bearing on international peace and security and should be affirmed. Therefore, we thank the Secretary-General for coming here to join in our discussion.

The Chinese delegation maintains that all preventive measures should be taken only under the prerequisite of respect for the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries and the will of the Government and people of the country concerned. The principle of non-interference in internal affairs is the primary principle guiding United Nations actions in conflict prevention. Preventive measures can be taken only upon the request or with the consent and cooperation of the country concerned. It is essential to obtain prior consent of the country or parties concerned on issues involving that country's sovereignty, such as setting up early warning systems or sending fact-finding missions and other special missions. Before any major decisions are to be made, the Security Council must listen to the views of all sides in a neutral and fair manner.

Secretary-General Annan pointed out in his report on the work of the Organization submitted to the current session of the General Assembly that if the primacy of the Security Council with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security is rejected, then the very foundations of international law as represented by the Charter will be brought into question. No other universally accepted legal basis for constraining wanton acts of violence exists. It is also emphasized in the report that conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking must not become an area of competition between the United Nations and regional organizations. The Chinese delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General on these points. We believe that any attempt to replace the Council in its leading role in conflict prevention is tantamount to replacing the Council in its primary role in maintaining peace and security. Such an attempt would not only weaken the authority of the Council but also would end up severely damaging the effectiveness of conflict prevention measures, or might even lead to the outbreak or escalation of conflicts.

Of course, the Council also has its limits; it is not a panacea. As is known to all, the root cause of conflicts is the unreasonable old international political and economic order. Changes to this situation could only be realized by concerted efforts by the Council, the whole United Nations system and the entire international community. The international community should be soberly aware that, although conflict prevention does not look as glorious as conflict resolution, the input needed in prevention is much lower than the losses caused by conflict, and the impact of successful conflict prevention is even more immeasurable.

The United Nations should demonstrate strong political commitment and allocate adequate resources to ensure successful implementation of preventive measures. At the same time, the Security Council should recognize the important roles that can be played by the various regional organizations and cooperate more closely with them. Such cooperation, however, must be based on the adherence by regional organizations to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the stipulations of its Chapter VIII. Under the guidance and monitoring of the United Nations, regional organizations will be able to win the cooperation of the world body and even broader support from the international community, thus playing a constructive role in preventive diplomacy.

In the 10 years between 1989 and 1999 alone, there have been more than 100 armed conflicts in the world, the majority of which have occurred in developing countries. This is no coincidence. For too long, the unreasonable old international political and economic order has seriously hindered the economic development and social progress of developing countries, putting them in a disadvantageous position in the new globalization wave. This is undoubtedly the major cause of the turbulence and frequent conflicts in some developing countries. Therefore, to prevent armed conflicts from occurring in the first place, we must take a long-term view and take meaningful steps to help developing countries in their economic development. Otherwise, preventive measures would only treat the symptom rather than eradicate the root cause, and there would merely be one passive reaction after another. Thus, the promotion of economic growth of developing countries is of important practical relevance in preventing armed conflicts.

Last but not least, I wish to emphasize that peace in various regions of the world is an indivisible and interrelated whole. In deliberating the issue of prevention of armed conflict, the Council should treat all regions of the world equally, especially in the case of Africa. There should be no preferential treatment for one or neglect of another. The tendency in the United Nations of paying only lip service to Africa should be rectified. The United Nations must apply more human and financial resources to preventive diplomacy in Africa.

The President: I thank the representative of China for the kind words he addressed to me and my delegation.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation would also like to express its gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your initiative in organizing today's open debate. We believe this discussion is both timely and useful, especially at this time when challenges to international peace and security are confronting the world community with the task of developing a strategy for early warning, timely monitoring and prevention of conflicts and crises.

A key role in preventive diplomacy rightly belongs to the United Nations, which possesses substantial capabilities in this sphere. The main issues of preventive strategy as well as political monitoring of their implementation must remain exclusively within the purview of the Security Council. Such an approach closely coincides with the conclusion drawn by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization to the effect that undermining the primary role of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security casts doubt on the very foundations of international law, such as the United Nations Charter. It is important that this idea underlies the Security Council's draft presidential statement prepared on the initiative of Slovenia.

In fulfilling its Charter role as the body that bears major responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security, the Council has the right — either at the request of States or on its own initiative — to use a broad set of instruments established within the framework of the United Nations to prevent disputes from erupting into armed conflicts.

However, we are convinced that preventive services to Member States must be provided only with their consent and with respect for the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. Only the unequivocally expressed agreement of the host country to preventive actions can serve as a legal and political basis for the adoption of relevant measures and also serve as a guarantee for their effectiveness.

In this connection, we proceed from the premise that any United Nations response, including in situations of a humanitarian nature, must be undertaken pursuant to the Charter and through a decision of the Security Council. The development of world processes undoubtedly dictates the advisability of developing norms of international law and adapting them to new realities. However, such work must be carried out collectively on the sound basis of the Charter, which would enable us to develop agreed upon decisions whose legitimacy would not be subject to doubt.

Of special significance is the observance by States involved in a dispute of the obligations under Chapter VI of the Charter, providing for a broad set of instruments for the settlement of disputes through peaceful means.

The Security Council can play an important role in preventing armed conflicts by enhancing the effectiveness of arms embargoes. As we have repeatedly emphasized, an arms embargo full of holes can only aggravate a military confrontation between conflicting parties.

Preventive measures should also include steps to demobilize and disarm former combatants and reintegrate them into peaceful life, which might be an effective means for ensuring the irreversibility of peace processes in former hot spots. An example of this is the difficult situation regarding compliance with the Protocol on Military Issues in Tajikistan. Of special importance is assistance to the United Nations Mission in Tajikistan, along with adequate financial and material support from the international community.

Without an effective arms embargo, we cannot stabilize the situation in Kosovo and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The failure of efforts to disarm the combatants has, unfortunately, led to a breakdown of the peace process in Angola.

The topic of preventive action is inextricably linked to the problem of the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons in regions of crisis. Russia is interested in stepping up the campaign against the unlawful spread of such weapons. We support the involvement of the United Nations in such efforts if relevant States agree and an appeal for assistance is made to the Organization.

Also deserving of support is more effective involvement on the part of the United Nations of a civilian component of multifunctional peacekeeping operations, in particular of civilian police, with a view to monitoring observance of human rights, the maintenance of order and the rule of law. At the same time, we maintain a principled disagreement with the notion of endowing such a component with enforcement powers.

An essential element for early warning is now the multifaceted efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to enhance the preventive capabilities of the United Nations. Regional organizations and subregional structures are playing an important role in early warning and in the prevention of conflicts. However, their activities must comply strictly with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter. The recommendations of the Secretary-General on a more rational and economical division of labour between the United Nations and regional organizations should be studied on the basis of that Chapter of the Charter. Emphasis here should be placed on the advantage of the use of political, diplomatic and legal means.

The Russian Federation, with full recognition of its responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council, is prepared to continue to promote a search for ways to enhance the activities of the Security Council with a view to preventing armed conflicts.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) *(spoke in Arabic):* First of all, my delegation welcomes the initiative taken to discuss this important issue. We hope that this effort will help us in our debates, especially since at the dawn of the third millennium the international community hopes that the Council will put an end to disputes throughout the world by laying the foundations for a world of peace and security based on cooperation and solidarity.

Aware of the importance of preventing armed conflicts, the Security Council issued a presidential statement at its summit held on 31 January 1992, asking the Secretary-General to submit an analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening within the provisions of the Charter the capacity of the United Nations to prevent armed conflicts. This was to be done under what was called preventive diplomacy and on the basis of the establishment and maintenance of peace. Following this request, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali submitted his "Agenda for Peace", in which he stated that international circumstances were such that the United Nations was ready to play an important role in the prevention of armed conflicts. According to the "Agenda for Peace", if the Security Council had not been able to settle many international crises and conflicts it was because of the repeated use of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council due to the cold war and the tensions that prevailed throughout the world.

Preventive diplomacy is one of the most important ways of preventing conflicts. The "Agenda for Peace", has shown that the roles of the Security Council and of the Secretary-General are important. The roles of the General Assembly, regional organizations, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system are also of importance in ensuring the success of efforts to prevent armed conflicts. The Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, other bodies of the international Organization and regional organizations must all cooperate and coordinate their efforts. Selectivity and policies of double standards in dealing with conflicts should not prevail in the Council's discussions, and mechanisms to avoid this should be developed.

For example, we see that the issues of the Middle East, Palestine, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied Lebanese territories are not currently on the agenda of the Security Council, even though the basic principles for the continuation of peace negotiations taking place outside the Council are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). These resolutions of the Council have not yet been implemented, meaning that the occupying Power has flagrantly disregarded the will of the Council.

In this connection, we should highlight policies and strategies to strengthen confidence and provide early warning on the basis of detailed analysis and of determining facts, particularly since many conflicts have economic, social and historical causes. In this regard, conciliation and post-conflict peace-building are of particular importance.

The United Nations should encourage the international community to rebuild the economic infrastructure of States that have recently emerged from armed conflicts in order for them to avoid falling into a spiral of violence again. In accordance with the "Agenda for Peace", fact-finding commissions should be increasingly used as special tools on the initiative of the Secretary-General, the Security Council or the General Assembly. Any request for a country to be assigned a fact-finding commission should be considered without delay, and Member States should submit all necessary information needed to bring about effective preventive diplomacy.

There are many important tools available for the settlement of disputes under Article 33 of the United Nations Charter: negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement and other peaceful means. Those peaceful means are generally effective and can play an important role in settling many disputes and preventing armed conflicts.

There is no doubt that we are speaking about conditions in the best of all possible worlds. What is happening now, however, is that the most important United Nations bodies and institutions are working without proper coordination, a situation that has led to duplication of efforts, waste, contradiction and bad organization. The United Nations is a single Organization that has created many bodies to serve Member States. How, then, can one explain this contradiction and duplication of efforts? This is due to bad organization between efforts to build peace and to maintain it.

We note that the Security Council works apart from other bodies and institutions of the United Nations system, whereas the subjects and issues discussed in the Council are complementary and cannot be separated from each other. For example, the Council examines the issue of the maintenance of peace, but its role ends at the signing of a ceasefire agreement. Peace-building institutions such as the Economic and Social Council then intervene, without any real coordination between the two bodies and without a discernible line between the beginning of the role of one and the end of the role of the other.

Experience has shown that those roles are necessarily complementary. The lack of cooperation we are currently witnessing may lead to a dangerous renewal of conflict if the Security Council does not urge the Economic and Social Council to fill the gap left by armed conflicts by rebuilding peacekeeping institutions through the implementation of economic and social development programmes.

There is no doubt that the Security Council is the principal body responsible for the maintenance of peace and for coordinating the substantial resources provided by Member States for the settlement of conflicts. But is it not better to prevent conflicts before they erupt? Is it not better to prevent the repetition of conflicts by consolidating institutions and peace-building? Areas of tension still exist and will continue to exist as long as there is a lack of organization between United Nations bodies — particularly between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Another instrument available to the Security Council to stem conflicts is the committees on arms embargoes. It is true that the United Nations is not a Government and that it has no army. Its weight and prestige come from Member States. What happens, however, when there is a contradiction between the interests of the United Nations and those of certain Member States?

We are all aware that certain areas of tension have existed for over 20 years. Those tensions continue. We know that arms flows have continued without interruption and that mercenaries exist. This leads us to believe that such internal conflicts can exist for long periods of time only through the provision of outside and continually flowing arms and munitions. In other words, the United Nations is powerless in the face of the interests of certain Member States or certain parties within those Member States that try to gain quick benefit at the expense of peoples' lives and property.

The role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflict also involves the protection of refugees and victims of conflicts. The Council should give serious consideration to their situation, even if this is not strictly within the framework of its responsibilities. In that case, we should coordinate the action of the Council with those of organizations that help refugees, because it is unacceptable for refugees, the victims of conflicts, to be forced to bear arms by one or the other party to a conflict. They should be given sanctuary and taken to protected areas until their final return and rehabilitation, so that they become active members of society rather than causes of conflict.

Finally, what about the culture of conflict prevention? All that we see in the media is pictures of refugees in a state of despair and distress. The culture of conflict prevention is something more complex than that. It requires a heightening of awareness so as to instil in people's minds from childhood the harmful consequences of conflicts in order that they would not become involved in such conflicts. This would encourage us to ask for the creation of a detailed, targeted culture of peace in order to teach the harmful effects of conflicts.

The United Nations has teaching and training institutions and agencies that can teach such a culture on the basis of peace, which would prevail throughout the world, or on the basis of the sufferings of peoples in the wake of two devastating world wars. Even though current, post-cold-war conflicts are of an internal, ethnic or religious nature, it is necessary to adopt an integrated approach so as to teach the bases of peace and to heighten peoples' awareness of the harmful effects of conflicts by giving practical examples of what is taking place in current areas of tension, of which there are numerous examples.

An important point is that there is still hope, and we should reiterate this. There is still hope that we might see coordination between the Security Council and other United Nations bodies. Indeed, the Security Council coordinated its activities with the Economic and Social Council by delegating to that body the task of building peace institutions in Haiti after a lengthy conflict.

Indeed, a similar situation exists in Guinea-Bissau. By happenstance or coincidence, the Secretary-General appointed as Special Representative to Haiti the former Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau. We are convinced that these two peace-building operations, in Haiti and in Guinea-Bissau, will succeed and thereby convince those who have doubts about the Security Council that there is an organic link between peacekeeping and peace-building. Such expected success might be an example for other regions in the world that have been exposed to conflicts.

Finally, the Security Council must be fully convinced of the need to ensure coordination and liaison between it and other United Nations bodies in word and deed, through its methods of work and its practices, mainly by implementing the following points: first, a more strict implementation of arms embargoes in areas of conflict; secondly, participation of the States parties to conflicts in the deliberations of the Council, pursuant to Article 31 of the Charter; thirdly, dealing with the status of refugees in a positive way, so as to prevent their participation in conflicts; and fourthly, creating a targeted culture which would highlight the harmful consequences of conflicts.

The Security Council has a duty to play a role as coordinator in order to establish a complementarity with other United Nations bodies, especially the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, so as to actively prevent conflicts before they erupt. The Council could then rebut criticism that it is detached from the outside world, even if this affects Member States which depend on it. We all hope that we will see action, not just words, and that the Council can refute the criticisms that it is a private club.

I have been a bit lengthy, but I felt it was necessary given the significance and gravity of the subject.

The President: I thank the representative of Bahrain for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): I should like to extend my delegation's sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the delegation of Slovenia for your initiative in organizing this open debate of the Security Council on the role of the Council in the prevention of armed conflict. My delegation also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his opening remarks, which provide a useful framework for today's debate. This open meeting reflects the Council's continued commitment to engage in broader thematic debates that, hopefully, will expand its capacity to deal with the ever-evolving challenges to international peace and security. The wide participation of Members of the Organization today is a clear reflection of the usefulness of the open debate you have initiated on the subject.

In addressing the issue before it, it is imperative for the Council to remind itself that in seeking to fulfil its Charter-mandated role, the Council must, at all times, fully respect the principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those relating to the pacific settlement of disputes and action in respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. The Security Council acts on behalf of the entire membership of the Organization, and therefore responsibility, consistency and even-handedness must be the hallmarks of its actions.

Believing in the adage that prevention is better than cure, my delegation joins the call for the Council to continue to enhance its capacity for preventive action. Clearly, as stated by the Secretary-General, building a culture of prevention is much more beneficial, long-lasting and less costly than reacting to catastrophes only after they have struck. The Council has time and again emphasized that the prevention of armed conflict begins and ends with the protection of human life and the promotion of human development. It is timely that in the context of a more proactive and creative approach in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council should consider concrete and practical measures for preventive diplomacy. For this purpose, there is a need on the part of the United Nations for better information-gathering and analysis and for enhancing its early-warning capacity in order to monitor and, more importantly, to respond promptly and appropriately when confronted with these situations. Timely action is of critical importance if conflicts are to be addressed before they explode into violence, with their grave humanitarian consequences.

The prevention of armed conflict is multidimensional in nature, requiring the resources of a comprehensive and integrated United Nations system. Clearly, a cohesive and well-coordinated United Nations system is vital in any effort to prevent the emergence or re-emergence of armed conflict.

In this regard, we note with appreciation the enormous contributions made by all the principal organs and agencies of the United Nations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and others. Their active engagement in post-conflict peace-building situations is important in preventing war-ravaged societies that are in transition towards peace from returning to armed conflict. In this regard, it is imperative for the Organization to oversee the successful implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme of ex-combatants in all post-conflict activities, as it is for it to address the root causes of the conflict.

My delegation believes that there should be greater recourse to the use of preventive diplomacy and the good offices of the Secretary-General. The positive outcome of the Council's recent mission to Jakarta and Dili would argue for greater utilization of this mechanism by the Council in respect of future conflict situations, before they get out of hand. It is perhaps timely to dispatch such a mission to Africa, as has been proposed by a member of the Council. At the same time, there should be greater use of the Secretary-General's good offices in the context of preventive diplomacy as well as of the resolution of ongoing conflicts. The Secretary-General is well placed to bring to the attention of the Council early evidence of threats to international peace and security, genocide and other manifestations of systematic and widespread human rights violations and other developments affecting international peace and security for its consideration and for appropriate action.

This particular role of the Secretary-General in providing information to the Council is in conformity with the provisions of Article 99 of the Charter. We commend the role played by the Secretary-General in this regard, which on many occasions has contributed to facilitating consensus in the Council. The dispatching of envoys or special representatives to areas of serious conflict to undertake quiet diplomacy is invaluable and has been an increasingly important aspect of the role of the Secretary-General in assisting the Council to address the various issues of peace and security that come before it.

The alarming increase in intra-State warfare is fast changing the landscape and nature of modern-day conflicts. More and more, United Nations peacekeeping operations become embroiled in internal conflicts involving, on the one hand, legitimate Governments and, on the other, rebels and warlords under a loose chain of command. In these conflicts, the destruction not just of armies, but of civilians and entire ethnic groups or groups of people of different faiths or religion, is increasingly becoming the main, or the strategic, objective. This must be strongly condemned. In such conflict situations, the defence of imperilled humanity must be of paramount importance for the United Nations and the international community. We believe that in the context of the changing nature of current conflicts the Council must re-examine past and present approaches and strategies and formulate new ones in keeping with the demands of the times. Even in respect of classic inter-State conflict situations, it is regrettable that the Council has not been successful in bringing the warring parties to a negotiated settlement of their armed conflict.

The Charter, of course, provides the Council with options, including the invoking of certain provisional measures not involving the use of force, in order to defuse such situations. One such option comes under Article 40, which provides an avenue for Council action, including the imposition of arms embargoes and targeted sanctions. However, in contemplating such actions, every effort should be made to ensure that they do not lead to any undesirable humanitarian impact on the general population.

With the decreasing incidence of inter-State wars, the kind of intervention envisaged in the Charter has fallen out of use, while the notion of humanitarian intervention has increasingly been invoked to justify intervention in current conflict situations. The Secretary-General himself has recently raised this pertinent but contentious concept of intervention in the light of his increasing concern at the inaction of the Security Council and its failure to prevent the genocidal war in Rwanda, with its horrific consequences, and the forced intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the conflict in Kosovo, which saved thousands of lives and reversed the pernicious policy of "ethnic cleansing" in that territory, but which was carried out without the authorization of the Council.

At the core of the issue is the effectiveness of the Council in responding to crisis situations, including humanitarian calamities. The contradiction between, on the one hand, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and, on the other, the moral and ethical imperatives to stop massacres within States, is real and difficult to resolve. In any consideration of possible Council intervention in such situations, there is a need for a balanced approach, lest the Council be accused of bias and selectivity and of intervening in conflict situations involving some countries but not in others. What is important is the ability of the Council to consider such situations in a dispassionate manner and to find the political will to act decisively to prevent or contain such conflicts whenever and wherever they occur. Regrettably, however, the narrow interests of some members of the Council have often got in the way of effective decision-making by the Council. Clearly, a more cohesive and united Council would make an enormous difference in addressing the issue of the protection of vulnerable populations in situations of armed conflict.

There is much expectation on the part of the international community for the Council to effectively manage issues of international peace and security.

Consequently, when the Council is seen to be paralysed in dealing with some important issues, there is great disappointment over its lack of efficacy. Unfortunately, in many situations the Council cannot act alone. It requires the cooperation of all the parties concerned, including that of regional organizations and arrangements. Indeed, in a number of conflict situations, particularly in Africa, regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States, have been active players. However, this should not absolve the Council from playing its role. Regrettably, much of the impasse in and paralysis of the Council has to do with the peculiar decision-making process in the Council, so well known to members and non-members of the Council.

In the face of the many complex challenges that lie ahead, the issue of the efficiency and authority of the Council will have to be resolved as soon as possible, lest there be further erosion of the Council's efficacy and credibility. Clearly, what is required is reform of the Council to make it better reflect current realities, 54 years after its founding. A more representative Council, with a revamped decision-making process, would serve to enhance its credibility and strengthen its capacity to deal with the issues of international peace and security, including the prevention of armed conflict.

In this regard, I would urge the Council to put into concrete action the fine principles that have been articulated by many speakers in this debate, including the Secretary-General, particularly in the context of Africa, whose conflicts occupy much of the Council's time. The draft presidential statement which we will adopt should serve as a powerful incentive towards that end.

Thank you again, Mr. President, for organizing this important and useful open meeting.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his statement, which contained very useful and precise suggestions on how to prevent armed conflict.

In his report to the General Assembly at its fifteenth session, in 1960, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld pointed out that

> "in the end, the United Nations is likely to be judged not so much by the criterion of how successfully it has overcome this or that crisis as by the significance of its total contribution towards building the kind of world community in which such crises are no longer inevitable".

His words explain in an eloquent and brief way why we are gathered here today. But there is a more immediate reason. The long and difficult agenda of the Security Council demonstrates that the ideal of prevention has not been achieved; it is still distant. Instruments of prevention must be refined and strengthened. But, most of all, we have to curtail the deficit of collective will that is still the fundamental problem we face in creating a culture of prevention.

That is why I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on convening this open meeting. Today's meeting will mark another positive event in what has been a very fruitful and competent Slovenian presidency of the Security Council. Your initiative of also inviting the broader United Nations membership to discuss the issue of the prevention of conflicts should also be commended.

In discussing the means to prevent armed conflict, we should be clear about what tools are available to the Security Council in this endeavour. The first one — the one with uncontested legitimacy — is diplomacy. Guided by the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter, the Security Council is in a unique position to promote, through negotiation and persuasion, the ascendancy of reason where intolerance and misunderstanding prevail. Missions by Security Council members, on the model of that led by Ambassador Andjaba to Timor and to Indonesia, should also perhaps be a more common practice.

As a contribution to prevention, Article 99 of the Charter offers the Secretary-General a most valuable instrument for engaging the Council in preventive actions. And the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, is fulfilling his mandate with responsibility, courage and wisdom. The role played by his special representatives and by his missions of good offices is also to be underscored.

Preventive deployment, as occurred in Macedonia, and disarmament are equally useful means of prevention. We know well the destabilizing consequences of the illicit trafficking in and excessive accumulation of small arms.

We should not forget the need to reestablish a global atmosphere propitious to the exercise of preventive diplomacy. The strengthening of all disarmament treaties can be a decisive factor in that direction. The current paralysis in the global disarmament agenda should be overcome.

Conflicts are often caused by an abuse of power on the part of those in positions of authority. Justice is therefore very important for the maintenance of a climate of compliance with basic human values. The Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia are having an impact as instruments of deterrence. We are hopeful that this positive impact will soon be greatly enhanced by the entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

In preventing conflicts, the United Nations can also have recourse to regional organizations and arrangements, on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter, which provides that no enforcement action shall be taken without the authorization of the Security Council. In this regard, we share the assessment of the Secretary-General that conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking should not become an area of competition between the United Nations and regional organizations. Cooperation, not competition, is in the spirit of the Charter.

Brazil is of the view that the preventive action of the Council has to observe some basic principles in line with the United Nations Charter. First of all, conflict-prevention measures have to be predicated on the consent of the Government or Governments concerned, with full respect for their sovereignty. Secondly, progressive engagement of the Security Council, in which preventive measures are adopted gradually, is always preferable. Thirdly, the Council should keep a sense of proportion between the situation it intends to address and the measures it considers applying. And finally, in the face of extreme situations the Security Council might be compelled to resort to enforcement measures based on Chapter VII. In those cases, everything must be done to preserve the authority of enforcement action taken in the name of prevention and to ensure that it is in conformity with the principles of international law.

The means at the disposal of the Security Council are vast and should be applied without selectivity, because universality is the most solid foundation of legitimacy in any United Nations activity. But Security Council measures are not the only means available for the prevention of conflict. Other United Nations bodies too have a responsibility with regard to conflict prevention.

There is no single formula for conflict prevention. Preventive action, thus, should be taken after an assessment of the specifics of each situation. If we are to develop an encompassing strategy, it will no doubt have to be based on a deep understanding of the multiple roots of conflict.

The Secretary-General reminded us today of his recent remarks to the staff of the World Bank:

> "While war is the worst enemy of development, healthy and balanced development is the best form of … conflict prevention". (*supra*)

Brazil fully shares the Secretary-General's perception.

Moreover, when prevention fails, the impact of conflicts has a negative effect on economic cooperation worldwide. Even regions not affected by conflict suffer from the lack of funding, since financial resources that should be devoted to development assistance are drained to conflicts. It is to be hoped that the conditions for a strong, concrete basis for a comprehensive, long-term conflict-prevention strategy will be created when the eradication of poverty is no longer a vague ideal but a common endeavour of the international community, and when respect for human rights becomes a universal concern in daily life in all countries of the world. Lack of development should never be used to justify the horrors and atrocities we have seen in recent conflicts.

We recognize that present conflicts should be dealt with using the instruments now available and that we cannot wait to take preventive action until all conditions are present.

The ideal of perpetual peace, devised by Kant, was founded on the universalization of republican ideals — in today's words, the universalization of democracy. The realization that most of today's conflicts are internal, although with obvious international impact, creates room for a renewal and an update of Kant's concept of democracy as the key to peace. From that perspective, the establishment of democratic regimes is positive not only internally: it also carries its consequences beyond borders. More than ever, democracy is proving itself to be the most appropriate political model for a harmonious international order.

The presidential statement we are to adopt confirms that the Security Council is committed to developing a culture of prevention, which will take root when a simple idea once clearly expressed by Elie Wiesel becomes universally accepted: that the other is not my enemy.

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Essonghe (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): The importance of the subject that brings us here today — already discussed in some depth by previous speakers — is undeniable if we are to judge by the large number of delegations participating in this debate. I wish therefore to commend you, Mr. President, for having placed this item, "The role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict", on the Council's programme of work.

That initiative is all the more timely as it enables the Council to discuss a subject that is crucial as we come to the close of the century and that has in recent years given rise to repeated criticism in times of conflict in various parts of the world, and particularly in Africa, with respect to the Council's interpretation of its primary Charter responsibility for the maintenance of peace.

That responsibility, of course, stems from the farsightedness of the authors of the San Francisco Charter, who were determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and who thus mandated the Organization with the purposes set out in Article 1. The first of these reads as follows:

> "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

If I refer frequently to the Charter, that is because it contains the guidelines for United Nations action to promote and maintain peace and security in the world, and conflict prevention constitutes the best assurance of avoiding a given situation's or tension's deteriorating into an armed conflict that would be difficult and costly to resolve.

We remain convinced that a good early warning system or mechanism would make it possible to detect advance signs of a threat to the peace and would offer a better opportunity for conducting preventive diplomatic action aimed at encouraging the parties to a dispute to turn to a negotiated solution rather than to an armed confrontation that might be difficult to control.

The use of peaceful means, in other words, dialogue or legal settlement, is strongly encouraged and enshrined in the United Nations Charter, which stipulates in its Article 33,

> "The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their own choice."
>
> "The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means."

The Charter of the United Nations is therefore clear, not only in that it gives a mandate to the Council in the field of prevention of armed conflict, but also in that it indicates the steps to be taken to that end.

As the organ invested with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council therefore has the power to help stop a dispute before it turns into an armed conflict. However, the difficulty in this task involves, in our view, two areas: the swiftness of preventive action and the firmness of a real commitment. As for the swiftness of intervention, it seems absolutely imperative that diplomatic action be initiated as soon as the signs of tension are detected. The success of the Council in preventive action therefore depends on how promptly missions of good offices or of mediation are established. Any delay in doing this will create an opportunity for a crisis to deteriorate into an armed conflict.

As for the Council's involvement in crisis settlement or the deployment of peacemaking or peacekeeping missions, criticism has focused on the relative degree of procrastination and slowness observed, depending on whether the situation in question is in Africa or in other regions. Several conflicts, in fact, might have been avoided if at the initial stage the Council had not dragged its feet. Today, if the preventive deployment in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is cited as an example of preventive action by the Council, it is because a firm resolve was expressed and the influential members of the Council were eager to see the conflict resolved before it led to a regrettable situation.

This does not mean that the Council has not tried to erase the image of applying a double standard in terms of speed which it has done with more or less success. In fact, the Council has been able to show its growing interest in the field of prevention of armed conflict during the recent open debates and ministerial meetings on such subjects as the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations contained in his April 1998 report on the causes of conflicts in Africa, post-conflict peace-building, small arms and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The statements made during those meetings clearly showed how great are the concerns of the international community over the rising tension in the world.

In this enormous task of conflict prevention, not only does the Council not hold a monopoly, but it would not be right for the Council to confront the task alone. The Member States of the Organization, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, civil society, the development partners — all these should be called upon to contribute to calming tensions that can erupt into armed conflict.

This is all the more true since Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, to which I referred earlier, speaks of "collective measures". We understand this to mean the combining of efforts among national administrations, individuals, regional or subregional organizations and so forth.

In this spirit of solidarity and coordination, the United Nations not only should strengthen and improve its own early warning mechanisms, it should also contribute further to the establishment and functioning of similar systems within regional organizations or arrangements. It is regrettable that some of these already existing systems are facing the thorny problem of obtaining sufficient financing for appropriate operations.

If there is another field that relates directly to prevention, it is certainly that of post-conflict peace-building. The tasks of demobilization and disarmament should receive special attention in order to reduce, if not eliminate, the risks of resumption of combat because of the presence of weapons, and above all of small arms. The question of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are those most often used in conflicts, and especially internal conflicts, remains a major concern that must be faced by any post-conflict peace-building operation or any peacekeeping operation in the framework of a broadened mandate. This question was abundantly discussed in the debate on this subject held by the Council at the ministerial level last September.

However, it is important, and indeed vital, that the countries that produce and sell arms transcend their unbridled desire to make a profit at any cost. They must support the collective effort to eliminate and prevent armed conflict. Nations do not develop by force of arms, but rather by the financing of vital projects. It is in this context that we invite those States to contribute to the strengthening of arms embargoes. In this respect, we are gratified by the recent decisions taken by certain Governments and certain companies to break all links with rebel movements that sow insecurity in Africa.

It cannot be repeated often enough that preventing armed conflicts, most of which today are internal conflicts, means first and foremost eliminating the underlying causes, which are first of all economic, institutional and social. On these latter aspects, we should recognize that great advances have been made in the past decade in the regions most affected by armed conflict, most of which are developing regions.

In conclusion, while we recognize the importance of collective mobilization to prevent armed conflict, the parties in conflict must first show a sense of responsibility, seeking a negotiated solution to their dispute instead of opting for extreme courses of action.

There should also be greater recourse to traditional means of dispute settlement, following the example of the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity, who established committees of sages on the lines of African village councils.

Furthermore, those who have influence on the parties to a dispute should also be involved in preventing armed conflicts.

The President: I thank the representative of Gabon for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): My delegation would like to join previous speakers in expressing its gratitude to you, Mr. President, and your delegation for arranging this open debate on such a broad and important topic, "Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts". We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for setting the tone of today's debate.

There could not have been a better time, as we approach a new millennium, to collectively remind this important United Nations organ — the Security Council — of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in order words, for our collective security. We have no doubt whatsoever that the Security Council, with its power and prestige, has both the capacity and the ability to fulfil this fundamental obligation. But the weight of power and prestige is only worthy if it draws inspiration from the principle of fair play and even-handedness in dealing with all conflicts, no matter where they occur on this planet that we all share. Then, and only then, could the Council continue to lay claim to the moral authority to offer solutions to problems of common concern to all.

Since we joined the Security Council we have been insisting on the need to redouble efforts to demonstrate to those that we represent that, irrespective of their area of origin, all the Council members — permanent and elected alike — will show the same degree of enthusiasm and resolve in dealing with any conflict situation. Let us not be lulled into believing that relative security and stability in some parts of the world is enough to allow us to proclaim that our collective security is guaranteed. Unless and until there is reasonable security and stability everywhere, we cannot assume that everybody is safe.

It is certainly not by safeguarding our narrow national interests, to the detriment of the common good, that we can call this world a safe place. It is by safeguarding our collective security that our nightmares will end. Otherwise, we will continue to have sleepless nights.

This is why my delegation commends you, Mr. President, and your delegation for coming up with a most comprehensive draft presidential statement, which in our view constitutes a blueprint for the Security Council, showing how it can play the preponderant role that the whole world expects it to play in the prevention of armed conflicts. The draft contains very useful guidelines to help the Security Council be more proactive, rather than being too often characterized as a helpless spectator as dramatic situations unfold.

In this context, we would like to place greater emphasis on the usefulness of early-warning mechanisms, preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment. This includes, of course, Security Council missions abroad. Various examples have been cited in which the Security Council succeeded in defusing potential conflicts.

But the Council must not be selective in its approach. Furthermore, as the old saying goes — and as my friend, the Ambassador of Malaysia, has already noted — prevention is better than cure. It is one thing, though, to be forewarned, but it is quite another to take urgent and appropriate action. In this regard, the role of the Secretary-General, as provided for in Article 99 of the Charter, gains added importance.

Unfortunately, experience has shown that more often than not the Security Council does too little, too late, especially when the situation concerns Africa. This is sad to say, but nonetheless true. We have witnessed situations in which encouraging statements were made, only to be followed by the Council's developing cold feet later on, when the support and solidarity of the rest of the international community were most needed.

While recognizing the primary responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, we are mindful of the important role that regional organizations and arrangements can also play to complement the efforts of the Security Council. We are all too familiar with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter on such arrangements, but there should always be close coordination between the Council and regional organizations.

In this connection, my delegation notes with satisfaction the growing cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its military observer group, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), notably in Sierra Leone. We hope to see the consolidation of this cooperation in the months ahead, with the imminent deployment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

A successful operation in Sierra Leone augurs well for other operations in other parts of Africa. We have in mind the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we anxiously look forward to meaningful cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.

It must also be recognized that for the Security Council to succeed in resolving problems around the globe the parties concerned must also cooperate fully and unconditionally — be they State or non-State actors. Other situations require concerted international efforts in the short and medium term in order to have an impact. In this context, we immediately think of the question of small arms, light weapons and arms embargoes — to mention only a few areas. Sustained, concerted international efforts are, however, not only desirable but absolutely necessary to tackle the more difficult problems of post-conflict peace-building and, more generally, the hardest nut of all to crack: poverty eradication.

As you know, Sir, and as is widely recognized, poverty is one of the root causes of armed conflicts. My delegation is pleased that this point is raised in the draft presidential statement, which goes on to underscore the need for all United Nations organs and agencies to act accordingly to assist Member States to eradicate poverty. It is not necessary to emphasize the more urgent need to attain the target that was set many, many years ago to increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. Perhaps that goal will be attained in the next millennium. It is so within reach, yet it is so difficult to summon the necessary political will to make it happen.

Anyway, coming back to the point of departure — the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts — my delegation is of the view that by scrupulously following the guidelines outlined in the draft presidential statement, the Council's credibility will be enhanced, its authority strengthened and a stable world guaranteed to all.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General rightly stated that

> "Taking prevention more seriously will help to ensure that there are fewer wars and less consequential disasters to cope with in the first place." *(A/54/1, paragraph 21)*

In fact, the Carnegie Foundation has put this into perspective. It has estimated that the cost to the international community of the seven major wars in the 1990s — not including Kosovo — was $199 billion, and that this was in addition to the cost to the countries actually at war. More important, it has been concluded that most of these wars could have been averted if more attention had been paid to prevention.

My opening remarks are aimed at demonstrating the importance of preventing armed conflict and the significance of today's meeting in turn. My delegation commends you, Mr. President, for having arranged this important open debate.

The primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the Security Council. However, the prevention of conflict and its recurrence requires a multifaceted approach by the Security Council and other principal organs. In Africa, for the most part, the causes of armed conflict remain poverty and underdevelopment. Hence, as the Security Council considers its role in the prevention of armed conflicts to be within its primary responsibility, the principles and provisions of the Charter must be adhered to.

Today, internal wars continue to take a heavy toll on civilian populations, especially the most vulnerable. Early warning is therefore the best way to avert tragedies in different parts of the world. The Security Council must continue to work to preserve peace at all times, irrespective of the fragility of the peace or the geographical location. Where peace agreements have been secured, the Security Council must act swiftly to assist in consolidating the peace by facilitating implementation of those agreements. Delayed action is delayed peace and prolonged suffering. More often than not, peace between adversaries is inherently fragile and thus needs to be nurtured to longevity.

In Sierra Leone, swift action by the Security Council under the appropriate and adequate mandate would have the saved lives and limbs of thousands of innocent civilians. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while peace remains fragile, as in many other conflict situations, not only may a prolonged delay in deploying military observers to preserve the peace achieved by the peacemakers unravel the achievements of the regional peace process; but the recurrence of conflict holds real possibilities of engulfing the major part of the continent. Therefore, for peace to become real in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in neighbouring countries, the Security Council should show the same resolve, urgency and commitment towards African situations as it has and continues to do towards others.

In the African situations and elsewhere, the Secretary-General has shown his determination to use his good offices to address armed conflict where it exists and my delegation commends him for that. Indeed, the Security Council's work is in part facilitated by the good offices of the Secretary-General. Fact-finding missions through the Secretary-General's office, such as the mission of his Special Envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other relevant African States, have proven useful in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of that situation by the Security Council in particular. Similarly, the Security Council's mission to Jakarta and Dili this year — which I had the honour to lead — clearly demonstrated the usefulness of such missions. The Council should therefore utilize this type of mission whenever feasible. In this connection, I wish to thank my colleagues, in particular Ambassador Holbrooke, for their kind words addressed to me. Let me also state that the mission's success was the result of the collective effort of all the members of the Security Council, including you, Sir.

However, in the end and to a great extent, it is the willingness of the Security Council to take appropriate action and the trust, confidence and cooperation between the Secretary-General and the Security Council that will determine whether armed conflict can be prevented or whether lives have to be lost first before action is taken. Equally important are the readiness and the willingness of those primarily involved to prevent armed conflict and to resort to peaceful means.

At their last Summit in Algiers before the new millennium, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) heads of State and Government reaffirmed their resolve

> "to make the OAU the vital instrument of their collective action both within Africa and in relation to the rest of the world".

In that respect, they declared that the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is a valuable asset for the African continent which must be nurtured and consolidated. The heads of State and Government made it very clear that this Mechanism, which symbolizes the concerted resolve of the African continent to fully assume its responsibilities, does not release the United Nations from its obligations under the Charter as far as the maintenance of international peace and security is concerned. It is therefore important for the Security Council in particular to assist the OAU in its early-warning capacities.

Regional arrangements can contribute to the maintenance of peace only if their actions are consistent with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. It is in this context that we welcome the expanding relationship between the United Nations and the OAU, especially in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking and conflict resolution. The tendency to undertake peace enforcement without specific mandate from the Security Council and without acting in accordance with the United Nations Charter should be discouraged, as it undermines the credibility of the Council and diminishes its role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In order to prevent conflict, a sound understanding of the underlying factors is necessary. For example, in Africa, the accumulation, through illicit trafficking, of small arms and light and heavy weapons, *inter alia*, needs to be prevented. Therefore, the relevant recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa need to be implemented.

In this decade, sanctions have been used more frequently, though with mixed results. Namibia supports the view that, before sanctions are imposed, their scope and purpose should be defined and their duration clearly specified in the resolution imposing them. Resolving problems arising from the application of sanctions must rest with the United Nations, under whose name they are imposed. We expect a solution to this problem to be found urgently. Furthermore, it is our strong belief that, once sanctions are imposed, there should be no selectivity on the part of the Security Council in implementing them. In this connection, we commend the tireless efforts of Ambassador Fowler to ensure that sanctions imposed against UNITA are fully implemented.

We have a real chance to ensure together that armed conflict is prevented and present conflict contained. But conflict is prevented by people and it is only logical that those who are entrusted to prevent conflict be safe and secure. This cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, competition among United Nations Members and regional organizations cannot prevent conflict, nor can it enhance peacekeeping and peacemaking. The success of any peacekeeping operation rests on the pillar of consensus among all States members of the Security Council. The United Nations peacekeeping operations are indeed an essential component of the role of the Security Council in maintaining peace and security in the world. In addition, changing times and circumstances dictate that the international community needs a revitalized Security Council. We remain convinced that the presence of the African States in both categories of membership in the Security Council will help Africa to participate meaningfully in the prevention of armed conflict, particularly in Africa.

It is in this context that the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Algiers declared:

> "We reaffirm our commitment to respect for the major role and responsibilities of the United Nations and its Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection, we once again call for a genuine democratization of international relations based on the active participation and balanced consideration of the legitimate concerns of all nations. We call, in particular, for the democratization of the United Nations and its Security Council and the recognition of Africa's legitimate place within this organ."

Words of intention alone are never enough. For the Security Council to play its role in the prevention of conflict, a strong political commitment from all Member States, complemented by adequate provision of financial resources, is key. Political commitment and allocation of adequate financial resources are integral parts of effective prevention of armed conflict and maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of Namibia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): The Netherlands warmly welcomes the initiative of the Slovenian presidency to devote an open debate to the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. We regard conflict prevention as the core of the duties the Security Council is called upon to carry out on behalf of the United Nations membership. It lies, naturally and manifestly, at the heart of the Netherlands' integrated approach to the Council's agenda. The following remarks are complementary to those which will be made later on by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, with whose statement the Netherlands fully associates itself.

It is self-evident that preventing an armed conflict is preferable to dealing with it after it has broken out. The cost of an armed conflict in humanitarian, societal and economic terms will always exceed the outlay for even the most intricate preventive action. So why is it that so many opportunities are being missed in the field of conflict prevention?

Conflict prevention by the Security Council rests on three pillars: early warning, early attention and early action. The Council has to be warned about an impending crisis early enough for it to be able to act; it has to give sufficient and timely attention to the case, and then it has to act effectively to prevent the conflict from erupting. The problem nowadays is not a lack of early warning of impending crises, but rather the follow-up to it, a point which was also made by the Secretary-General in his report on conflict, durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

Of fundamental importance, therefore, is the attitude of the 15 Member States on the Security Council. It is they who make or break the relevance of the Council to the maintenance of international peace and security. In this regard, the Charter has assigned a special responsibility to the permanent five, but it also singles out the non-permanent ten in that it expects them to have been elected with due regard to their contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Yet, positions are sometimes taken which stand in the way of effective Security Council action. All Council members subscribe to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. These are contained in Chapter I of the Charter and include the venerable Article 2, paragraph 7, which stipulates that nothing shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. The current session of the General Assembly has witnessed an impassioned debate on the enduring validity of that provision.

Without wishing to stoke up a similar debate in this Council, we cannot help pointing out that everything the Charter has to say with regard to the prevention of armed conflict in Chapters VI and VII and in Article 99 appears to have been drafted with conflicts between States in mind, while the overwhelming majority of present-day conflicts on the Council's agenda are of an internal, domestic nature. Against that background, a rigid interpretation of Article 2, paragraph 7, would preclude adaptation to this reality and, in effect, make all the Charter's provisions on the prevention of armed conflict ineffectual. Rarely have we come across more convincing evidence that Article 2, paragraph 7, cannot possibly be the alpha and omega of the Charter today.

One of the most telling indicators of impending conflict is the occurrence of rampant human rights violations. Such abuses reflect a breakdown of the rule of law and can be a prelude to violent domestic conflict with consequences for international peace and security. For that reason, the Security Council should treat the reports of the Human Rights Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as potential early warning documents. In the context of conflict prevention, the Council cannot avoid addressing the internal situation of States wherever negative developments are apt to degenerate into large-scale atrocities and massive dislocation of civilians. This cannot be rejected on grounds of domestic jurisdiction. As the Secretary-General has made clear, ethnic cleansers and mass murderers are not protected by the United Nations Charter.

In discussing the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention, one cannot escape the hotly debated issue of the veto. As the Netherlands Foreign Minister said in his intervention at the opening of the General Assembly, no matter when or how the debate on the veto will end, those who can wield it should exercise maximum restraint, in particular in situations of humanitarian emergency. If a permanent Council member uses or threatens to use its veto, it is duty-bound to explain to the world why it is blocking action by the Council. The right of veto is an extraordinary privilege accorded to only five members of the United Nations. It goes without saying that it should never be exercised for reasons which are extraneous to the issue of international peace and security that is before the Council.

The instruments the Council can employ in preventing armed conflict are partly to be found in Chapters VI and VII of the United Nations Charter. Council members should not feel restricted to those alone. After all, peacekeeping operations are not mentioned in the Charter, and they have become a major tool in the Council's hands. In view of the nature of current crises, often involving non-State actors and sometimes failed States, the Council has to be pragmatic and unorthodox as regards its tools and its interlocutors, as it was in September when it dispatched a mission to Indonesia and East Timor.

When discussing the Security Council's role in conflict prevention, it is important not to lose sight of the Secretary-General's role in that field. These roles should be mutually supportive; the Council and the Secretary-General are partners, not competitors. Their joint endeavours in September to encourage the Indonesian Government to accept the deployment of a multinational force in East Timor were a notable example of effective cooperation between the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

Article 99 had already been mentioned in passing when I drew the Council's attention to the precarious relationship between conflict prevention and domestic jurisdiction. My delegation strongly encourages the Secretary-General to make liberal use of his authority under that Article, including when the matter he wishes to bring to the Council's attention has not yet revealed its cross-border potential.

The current debate is about the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention. However, given the nature of the security challenges that face us, it is evident that the Council cannot operate alone. Ideally, its political measures should be integrated with structural measures addressing the root causes of an approaching crisis, such as building democratic institutions, strengthening the rule of law and promoting development.

Both nationally and internationally, the preventive impact of an effective legal system for the prosecution of human rights violations is obvious. It is in the first place at the national level that such a system should be in place and, if necessary, strengthened. For situations in which States themselves are unable or unwilling to prosecute and punish perpetrators of the most heinous crimes, the International Criminal Court has been created. The Court will also act as a powerful deterrent to potential perpetrators. The Netherlands therefore urges States to sign and ratify the Statute of the Court so that it can start functioning as soon as possible.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)(*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and on your wise leadership of the Council. I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, and the members of his delegation for his able and successful stewardship of the Council during the past month.

An extremely important matter is before the Council today — namely, the role and contribution of the Security Council in achieving a fundamental objective of the

United Nations: the prevention of armed conflicts. Like any other organ of the United Nations system, the Security Council is governed and guided by the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as set out in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter. One of the main purposes of the United Nations as a whole, as defined in Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Charter, is the maintenance of international peace and security. That paragraph also provides that to that end, a purpose of the United Nations is

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

The principles governing the work of the United Nations and its organs are set forth in Article 2 of the Charter, which provides for, *inter alia*, the sovereign equality of all its Members, settlement of disputes by peaceful means, Members' refraining from the threat or use of force in their international relations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

The Charter entrusts the maintenance of international peace and security to both the General Assembly and the Security Council. Under Article 11, paragraph 1, the General Assembly may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, and it may make recommendations with regard to such principles to its Members, to the Security Council or to both.

Under Article 24 of the Charter, Members of the United Nations have entrusted the Security Council with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and Member States agree that the Council, in carrying out its duties under this responsibility, act on their behalf. In discharging these duties, the Security Council shall act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the powers vested in the Security Council. Hence, the mandate for maintenance of international peace and security is a joint responsibility of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Thus, the primary responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security is not an exclusive function of the Security Council.

The Security Council fulfils its responsibility on behalf of all Member States and in their collective interest, and not on behalf of or in the interest of one or some of the members of the Council. I feel the need to state and to clarify the terms of reference of the Security Council as a primary organ of the United Nations system: compliance with the mandate delineated by the United Nations Member States in the Charter and adherence to the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter are the only admissible legal basis accepted by Member States for the functions of the Council.

The Security Council's deviation from its mandate or non-compliance with the principles set forth in the Charter could, indeed, undermine the credibility of the Council if a larger United Nations membership felt that the Security Council was not acting on its behalf, nor in its collective interest, but rather was acting in the interest of a few Member States or a single State. In addition, the preservation — indeed, the enhancement — of the credibility of the Council depends on total compliance with international law as well as with international treaties and conventions.

International understandings established by consensus or in the form of international instruments of a universal character are the true expression of the will of the international community. The Security Council's work and resolutions cannot be respected or complied with by Member States unless they reflect the will of the majority of Member States.

This is embodied in Article 25 of the Charter, which states that Members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter.

The starting point is the reform of the Security Council itself — in particular, and in a speedy fashion, its working procedures. Its procedures and methods of work must ensure that the Council's decisions reflect the will of the majority of the Member States represented in the General Assembly. It is perhaps useful here to recall that many speakers today, as well as the Secretary-General, emphasized this point.

The majority of States represented in the General Assembly must participate in the open debates held by the Council from time to time before the adoption of any important decisions by the Council, or when the Council takes up a new subject. These discussions must form the basis of any resolution to be adopted by the Council; the basis must not be closed-door discussions among a limited number of States, which discussions do not represent the collective will of the international community, as is the case in addressing many issues, including the issue before the Council today.

The text of the draft presidential statement was drafted and discussed before this meeting was convened. The question that arises is as follows: what is the impact and significance of the opinions of the Member States of the United Nations in this forum today — indeed, every day?

To enhance, or rather to restore, the credibility of the Council, it must comply with the resolutions that it adopts. Indeed, the Council must be the first to comply with its resolutions and the last to breach them. Otherwise, how can the Council call upon States and other organs to comply with those resolutions if the Council itself modifies its resolutions, or reinterprets them, or changes their interpretation, in response to the wishes of this or that party?

That being said, allow me to proceed to the core subject to which the Council has dedicated this open debate on what it could contribute to prevent armed conflicts. What is the nature of its contribution in the context of its responsibility to maintain international peace and security in correspondence to the contributions of other United Nations organs and regional and international organizations and subregional organizations? No agreement on answers to these questions can be reached before identifying the existing or potential threats to international peace and security in our contemporary world. Agreement on the nature of these threats and their early detection is a sine qua non, along with the political will to speedily take action to confront them and to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts.

It is our view that nuclear threats and risks, even as a result of human error or a technical malfunction, remain the greatest threat to international peace and security. Removal of such threats cannot be achieved without total elimination of nuclear weapons. To focus only on nuclear non-proliferation has proved to be impractical. As long as there are States that have nuclear capabilities and that insist on possession of nuclear weapons, the world will not be free of nuclear weapons, since other States will seek to acquire a similar nuclear capability.

The Security Council could play a crucial role in achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons, especially since the nuclear-weapon States are permanent members of the Security Council. If they are genuinely serious about carrying out their pledge to eliminate nuclear weapons, they can act, and do so through the Security Council.

The Council can firmly confront acts of aggression and occupation of territory by other States, but it cannot gain the confidence of the larger membership when it remains idle in the face of such gross violations.

Where is the credibility of the Council, when it has done nothing in the face of Israeli acts of aggression against Arab States for over 50 years and has taken no measures to deter such aggression? The Council was satisfied to pass resolutions that were totally disregarded. In the meantime under various fabricated pretexts and with astronomical speed, it hastened to impose sanctions against Arab States. Why did the Security Council not act against the military aggression of the United States against Libya in 1986? That aggression was absolutely unwarranted and targeted civilians, who were massacred by the scores. That aggression was condemned by the majority of the Members of the United Nations. In that case, did the Security Council act in accordance with the will of the majority of the United Nations Member States or the international community? What did the Security Council do, and what is it currently doing, in the face of the almost daily military aggression against Lebanon and the occupation of Lebanese territory, despite the fact that the Security Council had adopted a resolution in that regard?

Indeed, Israel struck United Nations posts and massacred civilians that had sought refuge in United Nations facilities in Qana, Lebanon. Did the Security Council not adopt a resolution calling for Israel's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon? There is a contrast here that stands in stark relief. Are Security Council resolutions binding in certain cases and non-binding in others? What did the Security Council do in order to put an end to the daily bombardment of Iraq, which bombardment is not in implementation of a Security Council resolution? This is what we expect the Security Council to do to prevent the outbreak of armed aggression: to deter aggressors and to hold them accountable by punishing them, and to complete its role afterwards by building and maintaining peace and by deploying peacekeeping forces and clearing the way for other international organs to perform their functions in order to promote and build durable peace.

The Security Council should not deal with subjects that it has started to take up, such as the illicit arms trade, human rights and drugs, because there are other competent organs in the United Nations system that can adequately deal with, and should address, such subjects.

Even the deployment of peacekeeping missions has been subjected by the Council to considerations and criteria that vary from one region to another in accordance with the whims and interests of some States, and not in the interests of international collective peace and security. Suffice it to cite here the way in which the Council addresses many ongoing conflicts, especially in Africa, which are virtually ignored except for meetings regarding Africa or statements or resolutions that favour support or appeal for support for Africa. But, in actual fact, the Security Council failed to adopt long overdue resolutions. The representative of Namibia has referred to many relevant and indeed important questions in this regard that the Security Council must seriously consider.

How long does it take the Security Council to take a decision to deploy observers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Sierra Leone, using various pretexts? Some demanded written guarantees. Others demanded adequate financial and security resources and guarantees.

The Council is treating the case of Somalia as if it were on another planet. It seems nowadays that the Security Council is driven by certain Western mass media campaigns and the interest that lies behind that media. The Council does not really act on the basis of international security, or in the interests of the majority of the Members of the United Nations. This situation must change if the Council indeed wants to play a constructive role in the prevention of armed conflicts. We expect the Council to respond to genuine potential threats anywhere in the world, in the real interest of world peace and security.

In closing, I wish to say that we have heard time and again references at today's meeting to the question of humanitarian intervention. Let me repeat that for a situation to be called "humanitarian" it must be dealt with seriously and dispassionately by those who have addressed this point today. But this is not the case. It is not difficult to cite the problems in a given country in order to justify and provide cover for an intervention that has implicit and predetermined purposes that affect the interests of those who would intervene, and not the humanitarian situation of those affected.

For instance, Libya lost exactly half its population in order to gain independence. We are therefore not prepared to accept any resolution that would contravene paragraph 7 of Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, conveying the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of any State, even under the lofty pretext of humanitarian considerations. Where were humanitarian considerations when we were under colonial rule? This is one instance of bad intentions we can cite. Kosovo is not the only example in this regard and East Timor will not be the last.

The President: I thank the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Finland. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the initiative by Slovenia to hold this meeting and the opportunity to participate in this important debate on conflict prevention. We acknowledge the importance of this link in the chain of thematic debates that the Security Council has organized in the past few months. We welcome the effort demonstrated by the Council in bringing this issue up for debate in order to generate new ideas and visions of how to prevent conflicts and increase the awareness of prevention.

Conflict prevention is a complex concept that encompasses short-term operational and long-term structural measures. The former include early warning mechanisms, preventive diplomacy, preventive deployment and preventive disarmament whereas the latter include peace-building measures that go deep to the roots of conflicts.

The United Nations Charter provides a number of tools that can and should be used in conflict prevention. We need to build on them and further develop them.

Existing methods, such as those enumerated in Article 33 of the Charter, should be strengthened and complemented. A ladder of prevention would facilitate identifying suitable preventive measures to be taken at each stage of an evolving conflict. The idea of a ladder of prevention is partly, but not exclusively, based on the principle of proportionality; that is, that preventive measures should be taken in proportion to the level of conflict.

The European Union is strongly committed to the primary role of the Security Council in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. The Security Council should actively direct its attention to areas of potential conflict, including the regular holding of forward looking discussions, and in this regard maintain a high degree of readiness to take preventive action. Certain preventive measures — like the establishment of demilitarized zones or preventive disarmament — belong to the traditional inventory of the means at the disposal of the Council.

After the indisputable success of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the first-ever preventive deployment mission, there is a wider acceptance of this tool among the Member States of the United Nations. The recent mission of Council members, which was related to the crisis in East Timor, was, on the other hand, a good example of the Council's success in using some of the tools at its disposal in a swift and decisive manner.

Preventive disarmament is a subject that has received extensive attention on the part of the European Union. We have adopted a Joint Action on small arms and light weapons as a complementary measure to the European Union programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. To combat the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons is also an integral part of the European Union's emergency aid, as well as of its reconstruction and development programmes. The European Union strongly believes that in the search for a long-term solution to conflicts — especially in Africa — high priority should be given to curbing arms supplies and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as well as that of diamonds, gold and other precious materials that provide finance for them. On the question of arms, the European Union encourages the Security Council to consider using its powers in a more decisive way to impose arms embargoes at early stages of emerging crises.

The European Union also supports the central role of the Secretary-General in preventive diplomacy, including fact-finding missions, good offices and other activities. We support the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the United Nations early warning system and to place increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy. We believe that the possibilities of the Secretary-General and his Secretariat are still not fully utilized.

In this context, we wish to recall Article 99 of the Charter, which provides the Secretary-General the possibility of bringing to the attention of the Security Council any matter that in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. For that purpose, the European Union considers that the Secretariat's capacity needs to be enhanced to enable the Security Council to conduct regular surveys of potential conflict areas.

We encourage Member States and regional organizations increasingly to share early warning information with the United Nations. The Secretariat should be made capable of providing the Security Council with an independent assessment on different regions, including early warning on emerging crises, as well as proposals for action. In this process, the Secretariat should make full use of all available information within the United Nations system. The ultimate aim would be that fewer and fewer conflicts reach the point where enforcement action by the Security Council is required.

The European Union commends the Secretary-General for highlighting in his report on the work of the Organization the humanitarian challenge facing the United Nations. He rightly points out that the prevention of armed conflict is the highest goal of the United Nations. His ideas for improving and strengthening strategies for prevention deserve our attention and support.

The European Union also fully agrees with the wish of the Secretary-General, as expressed in his report, that conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-making must not become areas of competition between the United Nations and regional organizations. It is important that conflict-prevention be approached in a pragmatic manner. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's efforts to further improve coordination and cooperation with the regional arrangements. The United Nations and the regional organizations possess various strengths and capabilities in the area of conflict prevention. Focus should be on achieving greater complementarity as mutually reinforcing institutions, making use of their comparative advantages.

The European Union plays an active role in the area of conflict prevention, early warning and crisis management, in cooperation with the United Nations and regional organizations. With the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty on 1 May 1999, the European Union has enhanced recourse to new measures of conflict prevention. The establishment within the European Union of the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit as well as the appointment of Mr. Javier Solana to the new post of High Representative will contribute to the European Union's capabilities. The Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit should serve as the European Union's focal point vis-à-vis the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention. The European Union looks forward to the next meeting between the United Nations and the regional organizations in order to explain in detail the changing role and capacities of the European Union in the field of crisis management and conflict prevention. The European Union launched the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which was signed in Cologne on 10 June 1999. Furthermore, the European Union will also contribute to security and prosperity in Europe through its enlargement.

The European Union welcomes the upcoming G-8 Foreign Ministers' meeting on conflict prevention, to be held in Berlin on 16 and 17 December 1999. This meeting will seek to further strengthen ongoing efforts to enhance the role of conflict prevention in international relations.

The European Union is convinced that the best strategy to maintain peace and security is to address first and foremost the root causes and the triggers of conflicts. Long-term structural prevention tries to address the underlying economic, social and other causes of conflict. It pursues the creation of equitable access to economic growth, economic opportunity, social cohesion and development. It promotes greater respect for human rights, maintenance of the rule of law and strengthening of democratic institutions. Today, conflict situations are often internal in nature and associated with violations of human rights, in particular those of persons belonging to minorities. The European Union attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights for the prevention of conflicts.

We should develop a more targeted use of the instruments of development cooperation in addressing the root causes of violent conflicts and redressing inequalities. Such activities must build on and strengthen local capacities and institutions. Development cooperation may have unwanted effects if deployed in disregard of the overall political situation. Therefore, regular analysis of the impact of development and humanitarian assistance policies is needed. In this connection, the European Union welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General exploring the idea of conflict impact assessments of development policies.

Restoration of security and order as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants into society are also vital. Since arms and combatants move easily across the border in most conflict areas, the Security Council should try to formulate mandates in such a manner that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes could be addressed in a regional context whenever possible.

The European Union welcomes with appreciation the increased role and contributions of non-governmental organizations in conflict prevention.

The European Union emphasizes the important role of international law in conflict prevention. International criminal tribunals serve important accountability, reconciliation and deterrence functions. They also provide a legitimate process through which individuals are held accountable for their transgressions, thereby avoiding the vilification of entire groups.

The European Union has actively supported measures to ensure accountability for criminal acts under international law. The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was a particularly important milestone in this respect, and we urge all States to sign and ratify it as a matter of priority. It is to be hoped that in the long run the main function of the International Criminal Court will be that of prevention. Increased awareness of the Court's ability and determination to try to punish those responsible for serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law should effectively contribute to the prevention of such crimes.

The report of the Secretary-General on Africa of April 1998 comprised important elements and strategies for conflict prevention. Unfortunately, the situation in Africa has yet to improve significantly, and much remains to be done. The European Union has sought to develop an active, comprehensive and integrated approach to the issue of violent conflicts in Africa, based on the 1997 common position and the European Union

Council conclusions on "Conflict prevention and resolution in Africa". One-third of African countries are at present, or have recently been, involved in civil wars. The European Union welcomes the Security Council's strong commitment to prevent conflicts in the continent and looks forward to further Council activity in this respect.

The European Union is ready to assist in building capacity for conflict prevention in Africa, particularly through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the subregional organizations. For the European Union, sustainable development in Africa is the priority. An enabling political environment conducive to human rights, good governance and a vibrant civil society are essential for sustainable development. The European Union is the world's leading source of development assistance to Africa. This assistance should also be seen as a long-term contribution to stability and conflict prevention.

We are all aware of the human suffering and the humanitarian and economic costs if we fail to prevent conflicts. Prevention may not be visible and make no headlines, but it is and will remain the supreme task of this organization and of the Security Council. Let us shift focus from acting only when a serious conflict has broken out to giving appropriate early responses to early warning.

The President: I thank the representative of Finland for the kind words she addressed to me.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend this meeting at 8 p.m. today, with a view to resuming at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the United Arab Emirates. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my appreciation and gratitude to you, Mr. President, for holding this open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. Allow me also to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for the role he has played in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Although we are living at a historic time, on the eve of the third millennium, certain problems remain unresolved and the challenges facing humankind continue to grow. They result from the pursuit of armed conflicts, both civil and regional, as well as from instances of occupation and the effect that occupation has on regional and international peace and security. This means that the international community, and in particular the Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, must act transparently, methodically and with no double standards whatsoever in order to resolve these problems peacefully and in accordance with Security Council resolutions, the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

While we support proposals aimed at further coordination and cooperation between the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and international regional and subregional organizations so that peacekeeping and preventive forces can be swiftly deployed with the aim of resolving existing crises or preventing others from erupting, we also reaffirm the need to further develop the role of the Security Council in post-conflict peace-building. That role should involve joint and neutral programmes to disarm, demobilize and rehabilitate ex-combatants as well as to ensure the return of refugees and provide development aid to meet the growing needs of the countries affected. Support must also be provided for the human, economic and social development of the peoples in those countries.

In the judicial sphere, it is essential to ensure regional and international cooperation for pursuing and sentencing those responsible for crimes of genocide during armed conflicts so that we can eradicate that dangerous phenomenon, which is in violation of the provisions of international humanitarian law and all human rights conventions on the treatment of civilians in time of war. That is why we reaffirm the responsibility of the international community to support national, regional and international mechanisms to deal with this dangerous phenomenon, in particular crimes of genocide and the taking of United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers as hostages.

The United Arab Emirates has noted the humanitarian assistance provided in the regions affected by conflicts. However, we believe that this should not be an alternative to resolving such conflicts and violations of human rights, but rather an integral part of peacekeeping operations and programmes and initiatives for national reconciliation. We reaffirm the need for neutrality and transparency in the activities of the Security Council and other parties involved so as to limit the suffering of civilians in armed conflicts. This should be carried out with full respect for the sovereignty of States, their territorial integrity and political unity and in accordance with the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, which is stipulated in international law. We reaffirm the need to respect the security and safety of United Nations staff as well as those of other international missions in such territory. In this regard, we call for appropriate training for those working to provide humanitarian assistance during armed conflict.

Finally, we reaffirm the need to respect all international efforts aimed at furthering the role of the Security Council in the peaceful settlement of armed conflict and the protection of civilians in time of war, recognizing that this role should not violate the principles enshrined in the Charter and the provisions of international law. We reiterate the need to strengthen the consultations between the Council and interested States, in particular in coordinating joint efforts, in information exchange and in the dissemination of the culture of peace so as to ensure a better international understanding of human rights, thereby enabling humankind to live in prosperity and peace.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Arab Emirates for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. Since tomorrow is the last day of your presidency, let me also, on behalf of my Mission, thank you, personally, and the staff of your Mission, for the commendable work you have done during the term of your presidency of the Council.

The United Nations was established in 1945 with the primary aim of preventing armed conflicts between States. Over the past 54 years, unprecedented growth has taken place in the social, political and commercial interaction between States. These many and complex processes of globalization have in effect amounted to a period of rapid change, which, while holding out the prospect of many benefits, has often placed profound strains on States and their constituent parts. To paraphrase the Secretary-General, we have been moving towards an era in which there is a near-universal acceptance that States exist to serve their citizens rather than the reverse.

The stresses generated by these processes have often been so great that many countries have been unable to deal with the ensuing contradictions. More often than not, existing tensions within States have been exacerbated by the processes of globalization, and violence within States and societies has become epidemic.

My Government believes that the recent proliferation of intra-State conflicts demonstrates that there is a fundamental connection between the inequalities generated at the level of States and those generated within States. We also believe that unless there is a simultaneous commitment to address these fundamental inequalities within the system of international relations through reform and democratization, it will be difficult to attain their universal implementation at a national level.

It is no secret that the United Nations Security Council, established over half a century ago, is also struggling to come to grips with this new reality.

Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, the aim of which is to promote and institute appropriate methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes, has made some valuable contributions to the prevention of armed conflicts. Its principles should continue to constitute a fundamental starting point in our resolve to effectively empower the Security Council to promote the maintenance of international peace and security.

However, if we examine the major crises the Security Council has addressed this year, we must conclude that the United Nations still focuses the bulk of its efforts and resources on stopping, rather than on preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. We need to shift this focus on conflict intervention more towards conflict prevention, management and resolution. In this context, it is worth noting that the United Nations has only twice in its history authorized the relatively inexpensive preventive deployment of United Nations peacekeepers to the field: in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and in the Central African Republic.

Only once efforts under Chapter VI are exhausted is the Council meant to turn to other methods, such as enforcement. Past experience has shown, however, that by the time Chapter VII actions are contemplated, let alone implemented, the costs are normally stupendous: in terms of civilian casualties and abuses of human rights; in terms of displaced persons; and in terms of stress and damage to the infrastructure, economies and ecosystems of entire regions, if not their outright destruction. On top of this, one must then add the costs to an already financially enfeebled United Nations system of bringing peace to full-blown conflicts.

The South African Government would like to reiterate, as we have previously done before this body, the urgent need for all of us to renew our commitment to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. In this context, there are three things which we believe the Security Council needs to do — and do consistently — to demonstrate its resolve in the prevention, management and resolution of armed conflicts. The Council should commit itself to: promoting and supporting the efforts of regional early warning mechanisms; responding to the recommendations of such warning mechanisms with appropriate early action; and facilitating the establishment of an environment in which the root causes of a conflict may be addressed.

We have heard many times before that early warning mechanisms are critical for conflict prevention, perhaps so many times that the message appears to have become lost in the medium. We must acknowledge also that there is an ongoing debate within the United Nations on early warning mechanisms, where questions are often raised by Member States concerning issues of legitimacy and sovereignty. Questions are often rightly asked about the legitimacy and authenticity of information and analyses on conflict situations. Questions are sometimes understandably raised about whether the very act of gathering information on conflicts threatens the sovereignty of States. The Secretariat, on which the Security Council must rely for the bulk of its information needs, must more often than not tread a veritable minefield of controversy when it responds to requests for information.

None of these constraints, however, should be allowed to call into question the premise that early warning mechanisms should play a valuable role in preventing armed conflict.

So what needs to be done?

The Secretariat and the wider United Nations system need to continue holding themselves to the highest standards when collecting, collating and disseminating information on conflict situations. Given the need to address the sensitivities surrounding the question of information gathering for early warning purposes, the United Nations should continue to focus its primary efforts on building early warning and conflict-prevention partnerships with regional and subregional organizations.

For our part, States Members of the United Nations need to consider, collectively or individually, appropriate ways and means of contributing to the early warning capacity of the United Nations system, whether generically or for specific conflict situations. For the benefit of the conspiracy theorists out there, this need not translate into the creation of a global intelligence-gathering system.

That is not to say that non-governmental organizations and the media do not have a role to play in the provision of early warning information; they clearly do. Collectively, non-governmental organizations and the media typically command far greater information-gathering resources than all of our Governments combined. Certainly they command far greater resources than the United Nations.

The key to the provision of useful, credible information for the purposes of early warning for conflict prevention lies in the timely dispatch by the Secretary-General and the Security Council of United Nations fact-finding missions to conflict situations. Where regional or subregional organizations are involved in such initiatives, the Security Council should express its early and unambiguous support for such initiatives. Conversely, this places an obligation on Member States to accept such missions, and to extend to them the fullest degree of cooperation.

The Secretary-General stated last year in his report to the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318) that no amount of early warning will prevent conflicts unless it is backed up by early action. This, as we all know, is more often than not dependent on the capacity of the Security Council, and of the wider United Nations membership, to demonstrate the appropriate political will. In this context, early diplomatic intervention is typically the most useful and cost-effective means of intervention. Where possible, such international mediation should take place in cooperation with established regional and/or subregional governmental organizations.

South Africa and its regional and subregional partners are investing heavily in early warning and conflict prevention. In return, and where appropriate, especially where capacity constraints exist, efforts by regional and subregional organizations to resolve conflicts should be supported and backed up both politically and materially by the United Nations at an early stage. Where regional and subregional organizations have made explicit recommendations to the Security Council on measures to address a specific conflict, such recommendations should receive early consideration and should be acted upon with appropriate speed.

At the same time, and in the words of my President to the General Assembly in September, we believe that:

> "the requirement on the United Nations to make such interventions to prevent the outbreak of hostilities imposes an obligation on the United Nations that it should be seen by Governments and peoples as a truly even-handed interlocutor and peacemaker". (*A/54/PV.4, p. 9*)

To this subject I will return later.

In order to consolidate the gains made by successful diplomatic interventions, it is imperative to address the root causes of conflict. Armed conflicts, whether inter-State or intra-State, are not spontaneous expressions of violence. Typically their genesis can be traced to a combination of contemporary and historical factors including colonialism, poverty, underdevelopment and a lack of access to — or the denial of — socio-cultural, political and economic resources.

Nevertheless, holistic approaches need to be adopted to conflict prevention and resolution strategies which incorporate humanitarian actions to address emergency and other short-term needs; sustained political dialogue and institution-building to promote reconciliation, human rights and democracy; and appropriate and sustainable programmes and processes aimed at promoting infrastructural and economic reconstruction and development, and the elimination of poverty.

Of course, it is not the role of the Security Council to do all of these things. It is, however, the role of the Security Council to ensure that an appropriate environment exists for the parties to a dispute to address these issues, with the cooperation of their regions and the wider international community.

A number of factors have traditionally constrained the United Nations, and the Security Council specifically, in the pursuit of its conflict-prevention mandate, perhaps the chief amongst which is the lack of representativity and transparency of the Security Council.

The Council's considerable array of powers are conferred upon it by the Members of the United Nations, via Article 24 of the Charter. In conferring those powers, the Members expect that the Security Council's approach to dealing with conflicts should at all times be informed by the universally applicable norms espoused by the United Nations Charter.

However, as we approach the end of the millennium, we must acknowledge that by the majority of Members of the United Nations the Security Council is perceived as unrepresentative. To others it is merely an anachronism. By some even, it is perceived as a hegemonic instrument. These perceptions, which have grown over the past 54 years along with the growth in the number and diversity of the membership, have at times contributed to a grim atmosphere within the United Nations, in which the very principles and ideals of the Charter appear to have been brought into question.

A matter that has frequently dominated discourse at the United Nations is this: Whilst it may be our highest goal to promote and maintain peace, democracy and human rights, the questions "Whose vision of peace? "Whose vision of human rights?" and "Whose vision of democracy?" remain bitterly contested. The intersection of this reality with the pursuit of the noble ideals of the United Nations means that this disclosure has most recently found a renewed voice in the debate over humanitarian interventions.

At a time when this Organization should be celebrating the attainment of peace underpinned by universal norms of democracy and human rights, we are instead divided; many seem to fear that such ideals mean instead the imposition of a global mono-culture on the less powerful. One of the chief reasons for this state of affairs can be traced to the lack of representativity and transparency of the Security Council.

In order to be truly empowered by the membership to act consistently in defence of the ideals expressed within the Charter, the Security Council must be perceived to be legitimate in both form and function. This means that the composition of the Security Council, its powers, and its methods of functioning and decision-making must be representative of, and accessible to, the universal membership of the United Nations. Only when the Council is perceived to be fully legitimate will it be able to pursue its mandate of preventing armed conflict effectively and consistently.

In conclusion, in an era in which the majority of conflicts are intra-State conflicts, and in which many inter-State conflicts have intra-State origins, it is vitally important that interventions to prevent, manage and resolve conflict take place within the context of globally recognised criteria and norms, and with global support. This support will clearly not be forthcoming unless all the Members of the United Nations believe that they and their regions are adequately represented on the Security Council, for only by our simultaneously reforming and democratizing our system of international relations will our search for peace and security succeed.

The President: I thank the representative of South Africa for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Australia. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): A political cartoon in a major United States daily newspaper some months ago depicted the Security Council deep in debate over its response to a dispute that had already broken into violent conflict. One delegate is pictured saying to his anguished Council colleagues, "No, no, no. First comes earnest hand-wringing, and *then* comes ineffectual soul-searching."

The reality of the Security Council's role is, as we all know, considerably more positive. But the cartoonist's harsh interpretation points to the paradox of effective preventive action: much of it takes place unseen, and its success is measured not so much by what happens as by what does not happen. When it fails, the results are all too manifest.

It is also true that effective preventive action involves a complex combination of mechanisms. No single action can on its own ensure the absence of violent conflict. While timely remedial action can pull disputing parties back from the brink of conflict, the most effective prevention ensures that this point is never reached, and potential disputants are able to resolve their differences before the use of force is conceived of as an option.

In a sense, all international cooperation contributes to prevention, both by creating mechanisms to resolve differences between us and by addressing in practical ways many of the underlying causes of conflict. The interdependent networks of international cooperation in which we are all engaged, all the time, in economic, social, humanitarian, legal, security and other fields - even sporting fields - all play a part in building a culture of prevention.

Strong global norms are a crucial part of this equation. International law must be consistently applied and rigorously enforced. The role of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia has underlined the importance of effective enforcement of international criminal law, in ensuring that justice is done and in deterring similar inhuman and criminal behaviour in the future. The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court represents a milestone in the development of a stronger international legal system and a stronger international culture of prevention.

The network of international non-proliferation and disarmament machinery is equally important. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), arms limitation and reduction treaties, the Conventions on biological and chemical weapons and other international security treaties are all threads in the fabric of our collective effort to prevent conflict.

When one of these threads breaks, the fabric can start to fray. That is why Australia, like so many countries committed to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, was so concerned by the recent decision of the United States Senate to vote against ratification of the CTBT. We continue to encourage the United States, and other countries whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force, to take this step quickly.

At a local level, conflict can be provoked and fuelled by illegal and excessive stockpiling of and trafficking in small arms. More needs to be done in this area as a contribution to the prevention of armed conflict, and Australia is ready to contribute to international efforts to this end.

Because armed conflict has its greatest impact on the countries and people immediately around it, conflict prevention is in part a regional responsibility. There is great potential for practical, cooperative action to be taken at the regional level to complement wider international efforts. Australia is working closely with its

Asia-Pacific neighbours, through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), to explore ways of preventing disputes escalating into armed conflict.

The work that the ARF is doing is still at a relatively early stage, but nonetheless it is relevant to this debate. There are two aspects to our work. The first is to develop a common understanding of the concept and the principles of preventive diplomacy as they might apply in the ARF context. The second is to explore the overlap between preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures, focusing on two specific practical proposals: an enhanced good offices role for the ARF Chairman and the establishment of a register of experts or eminent persons. On the concept and principles for preventive diplomacy, a useful input to ARF discussions has been a set of principles identified by the second-track Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific as being suited to the circumstances of the Asia-Pacific region. It includes the principles of non-interference, peaceful methods, consent of the parties to a dispute, consistency with international law and of course timeliness.

One challenge ahead is for the ARF to devise a good-offices mechanism that would be useful in reducing the likelihood of conflict, while remaining fully consistent with those principles. The responsibilities and functions of such a mechanism could include, for example, initiating contact with the parties in disputes where conflict is imminent; facilitating information exchange, exploring underlying issues and causes of conflict; fact-finding; facilitating contact and dialogue between the parties in neutral venues; mediation, conciliation and making recommendations to the parties; and contacting outside experts for advice.

The ARF is also introducing a practical tool that is both an early-warning and a confidence-building measure. This is something called the annual Regional Security Outlook. The document will include voluntary contributions from ARF participants, identifying what they see as notable developments in the regional security situation and their perception of it. A number of speakers this afternoon, I have noted, have referred to the value of such early warning mechanisms.

The work of the ARF in promoting peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region should of course - and I emphasize this - be seen as supporting and complementing global efforts to achieve the same goals. But there are circumstances where regional approaches may be more appropriate, and there are others where the United Nations may be better placed to act.

The role of the Security Council is, self-evidently, a central one, in keeping with its authority under the Charter. It is a role that must itself build on and complement other international and regional mechanisms that contribute collectively to the prevention of conflict. It is an area in which Australia believes the Security Council can, and should, do more.

Early warning is one area where the Council could play a stronger role. Early attention to potential conflicts not only enables better-informed judgements about preventive action, it can itself be a powerful moderating influence on the behaviour of potential combatants.

We have argued before, including in the recent General Assembly debate on the report of the Security Council, that the Council should be ready more often to deal directly with the parties to a dispute. Such dialogue might take place here in New York or through special missions, such as the recent highly successful Council mission to Indonesia to discuss the situation in East Timor, which was led by Ambassador Andjaba of Namibia and in which you yourself, Mr. President, participated. Such contacts, we believe, can help ease tensions, can provide a very important circuit-breaker for a dispute or can clearly inform both sides of the risks of escalation and of the possible responses of the Council and of the international community should conflict ensue. These contacts can support and complement the good-offices role of the Secretary-General and of his special envoys and representatives.

Effective early preventive action depends in part on the quality and timeliness of information about potential sources of conflict. This is where initiatives such as the ARF Regional Security Outlook can make a practical contribution. We would very much like to see the capacities of the United Nations Secretariat strengthened in this regard, recognizing of course the resource pressures the Secretariat is under. And we would encourage the Secretary-General to make greater use of his authority under Article 99 of the Charter to bring to the attention of the Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. I would note here that the Secretary-General himself, in his thoughtful opening remarks in this debate this afternoon, outlined a number of practical steps that the Council could take.

The Security Council also has special responsibilities in the areas of preventive deployment and post-conflict peace-building. The United Nations Preventive Deployment Force demonstrated the effectiveness of preventive deployment. The effort that the United Nations and the international community are making in support of post-conflict peace-building in Kosovo and East Timor illustrates the importance of this part of an overall preventive approach - not just in response to humanitarian imperatives, but as a crucial tool, used deliberately in the prevention of recurrent conflict.

We all acknowledge that these are not easy or straightforward prescriptions. The task of prevention is a complex and difficult one that requires persistent effort and vigilance. Like so many other forms of international cooperation, it also requires political will and a determination occasionally to confront sensitivities in the interests of effective collective action - rather than falling back on that earnest hand-wringing and ineffectual soul-searching described by the critical cartoonist. It is a challenge that we believe the Security Council can and must meet.

In conclusion, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the Slovene delegation for taking this initiative. We believe this debate is a very valuable contribution.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for the kind words she addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I take this opportunity to commend your initiative to convene this meeting, which allows Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Security Council to express their views on an issue of great importance to the future of the Organization. We also thank you for the initiative of making the activities of the Security Council available on an Internet website within the context of your efforts to promote transparency and clarity in the Council's work.

In the same vein, I convey my thanks to the delegation of the Russian Federation for the outstanding manner in which it conducted the presidency of the Council last month.

The United Nations Charter sets down the principles that determine the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts within the context of its work in the maintenance of international peace and security. This is carried out through the application of effective collective measures to remove the causes that threaten international peace and security, as reflected in Article 1 and Article 33, paragraph 2, of the Charter. The latter authorizes the Security Council, when it deems necessary, to call upon the parties to settle their dispute by peaceful means. Articles 39 to 51 also give the Council the authority to take enforcement measures under Chapter VII with respect to threats to international peace and security.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General points out that preventing disputes is one of the most important commitments of the United Nations, but that little interest is accorded to preventive measures. Instead, huge resources are spent on efforts to resolve disputes. In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General also stresses the positive aspects of conflict prevention, such as social and economic justice and the requirements of economic and social development in the context of the establishment of peace and stability.

In "An Agenda for Peace", the former Secretary-General highlights the roles of the Security Council and the General Assembly in conflict prevention and of the United Nations in this regard within the framework of the commitment to international law and collective security measures and in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Here, we would stress the importance of the role of the Secretary-General in preventive diplomacy, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter, in bringing to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, so that it may take the measures necessary to prevent the outbreak of conflict.

In this regard, the Sudanese delegation welcomes the presidential statement, to be issued following this discussion, on the Secretary-General's consultations with the Council on the analysis of all threats to international peace and security along with recommendations, throughout the world. We would point to the important role assumed by regional organizations in the prevention of conflicts, since greater cooperation is required between the United Nations and these organizations in the promotion of joint action, cooperation and coordination to prevent conflict.

Sudan believes that there is a very close relationship between the prevention of conflict and the actions of the international community to take further steps to eliminate the causes of conflict by helping the developing countries to end poverty and to foster economic development and national reconciliation and stability. Each of these elements is closely linked to the prevention of conflicts that arise from economic and social causes. In this context, we must strengthen cooperation between the Security Council and all the bodies of the United Nations system, in particular the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

The primary role of the Security Council, according to the Charter, is first to focus on urging the parties to a conflict to settle it through peaceful means. This must be undertaken in full respect for the principles of the Charter, in particular those of the sovereign equality and independence of States and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States or in any other purely national concerns. We believe that the Council will be unable to assume its full role in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in the prevention of conflicts, until it is transformed into a more democratic body with a fair geographical representation of today's international community, instead of that of 1945.

In many issues that it has considered, especially those linked to aggression, the Security Council has exercised a policy of double standards. At times, it has used the language of condemnation and denunciation, while at others it has tried to enforce the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter. We find, however, that the Council sometimes ignores similar cases that strongly threaten international peace and security.

Before the Council is the issue of the bombing of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, which is an act of aggression undertaken by the United States. This issue has remained on the Council's agenda for over a year, while the very simple request of Sudan for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission — nothing more — has gone ignored. It is clear to me that the presidential statement to be issued will concentrate on the issue of fact-finding. The American aggression against the Sudanese pharmaceutical plant was a blatant violation of the principles of the Charter. The United States has failed to provide any convincing proof to persuade American public opinion — let alone that of the international community represented in the Security Council — that the aggression was justified.

Sudan shares the international community's interest in quelling the escalation, exacerbation and expansion of conflicts and civil wars in many areas of the world and in stemming the human tragedies and economic disasters they entail. Sudan emphasizes the importance of taking collective measures and redoubling efforts to suppress the causes of conflicts before they erupt. We believe, however, that these measures and means must be taken with the agreement and full understanding of the States involved and within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

The absolute call to intervene in the internal affairs of States outside such framework and in the absence of a just, democratic and transparent world order is in fact a call of the Council to an era of chaos and the hegemony of the mighty over the weak and the law of the jungle. We would like to recall here what His Excellency President Abdul Aziz Bouteflika, the current President of the OAU, said when he expressed the fears of small and vulnerable countries regarding humanitarian intervention. When addressing the General Assembly at the fifty-fourth session, he said:

> "we remain extremely sensitive to any undermining of our sovereignty not only because sovereignty is our final defence against the rules of an unjust world, but because we have no active part in the decision-making process in the Security Council nor in monitoring the implementation of decisions." (*4th meeting, p. 14*)

Despite the fact that modern history is full of examples of such unjust laws and resolutions, the American aggression against the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant, which we have referred to above, is a clear indication of the injustice wrought towards the Sudan by the Council by not even sending a fact-finding mission to Sudan.

Sudan — which calls on the Security Council to reject such double standards in the humanitarian domain and which attaches equal importance to any acts of violence perpetrated against all civilians all over the world, instead of following a selective approach — has great hopes that the Council will take up its functions in the maintenance of international peace and security within commitments to the principles of political independence and territorial sovereignty of all States in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

It is really ironic that when the Security Council meets to study and consider ways to promote its role in the prevention and containment of conflicts, the United States, which is a permanent member of the Council and a supposed safeguard of international peace and security, is trying today to fuel the fires of war in southern Sudan. The American Administration today has announced that it intends to provide direct humanitarian assistance to insurgents in southern Sudan. This is a blatant violation of Operation Lifeline Sudan, which is undertaken by the United Nations in the Sudan in the framework of transparency and in full cooperation with the Government of Sudan. This was expressed in all General Assembly resolutions in this area, which have commended the cooperation of the Government of Sudan.

The most recent of these resolutions was 53/10, which stipulates in paragraph 1:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Acknowledges with appreciation the cooperation by the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations, including agreements and arrangements achieved to facilitate relief operations with a view to improving United Nations assistance to affected areas, and encourages the continuation of that cooperation".

(*spoke in Arabic*)

We pose a very legitimate question: why does the United States fuel, through feverish attempts, the fires of conflict in southern Sudan at a time when regional efforts are made, with the support of the African continent and the international community, headed by the European Union, including the Council, in order to bring about a peaceful settlement in the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to which the Sudan is also fully committed.

This is in addition to the Sudan's commitment to other initiatives aimed at promoting the IGAD initiative, prominent among which are the Egyptian-Libyan initiative and a series of acts undertaken by the Government of Sudan on all levels to promote national reconciliation. The most recent of these took place last week, with the signing of the Djibouti Agreement, an agreement with one of the major opposition parties achieved through a valuable initiative by His Excellency Ismail Omar Guelleh, the President of Djibouti. The agreement has had a positive impact within and outside the Sudan and on many countries interested in Sudanese matters.

We had expected a super-Power such as the United States, with great responsibility in the maintenance of international peace, to support such efforts to bring about peace in the Sudan through positive participation, by including divergent view- points and seeking peaceful negotiations with other regional parties to bolster a peaceful settlement. However, it is now clear that the United States, through this latest step, is trying to destabilize the Sudan, destroy its unity and divide it into smaller States by attempting to destabilize the entire African continent through the very limited views of some of the African policy makers in the American Administration.

As the Sudan presents these facts before this historic meeting of the Security Council on the Council's role in the prevention of conflict, it is warning against this latest American step, which is considered a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and international law and contradicts the principles of international neutrality in transferring and transporting humanitarian assistance. The Sudan hopes the Security Council will assume its duties in order to bring about stability and peace in the region and the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

We would also like to stress that the Sudan will defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and will not allow any party, whichever it may be, to violate its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The President: I thank the representative of the Sudan for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Republic of Korea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your initiative of organizing another open debate today on one of the most important and urgent issues before the United Nations. This being our last opportunity to address the Council under your presidency this month, we wish to pay tribute to you for your exemplary contribution of bringing about greater transparency in the work of the Council, as illustrated in the number of open meetings and briefings of the Council under your distinguished presidency. We also thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his inspiring statement at the beginning of this meeting and in particular for the practical steps he suggested, with which my delegation fully concurs.

Contrary to the general expectation of peace after the end of the cold war, armed conflicts have persisted in many parts of the world at the national, regional and subregional levels. Any form of war has grave humanitarian consequences, but in this post-cold war decade, intra-State conflicts have proven particularly tragic and devastating. In such places as the Great Lakes region of Africa and the Balkans, we have witnessed large-scale ethnic cleansing, the dislocation of vast segments of the population and the devastation of civil institutions and the socio-economic infrastructure — all leaving huge numbers of refugees and displaced persons in horrendous conditions.

The reality is that the international community as a whole, and the United Nations in particular, have not always been successful during the post-cold war era in preventing such conflicts and atrocities in many corners of the globe. It is therefore clear that now, more than ever, the Security Council, pursuant to its primary responsibilities under the Charter, should make further serious efforts to reinforce its role in conflict prevention to avert such human tragedies.

Having said this, I would like to focus my comments on the following points to which my delegation attaches particular importance. The first is the need for the Security Council to develop an effective early warning mechanism for conflict prevention and, if necessary, to take specific measures for early response. In this connection, my delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in his report S/1999/957 for a more proactive use of a preventive monitoring presence in areas of potential conflict and for the deployment of preventive peacekeeping missions. We believe that the experiences of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) can be further built upon.

Secondly, it is our view that the Security Council and the Secretary-General have primary responsibilities under the Charter to play a central role in taking initiatives for conflict prevention. The Secretary-General should be encouraged, in close consultation with the Council, to make greater use of preventive actions as an indispensable tool in coping with potential conflict situations. In this regard, the Security Council and the Secretary-General could strengthen their collaboration in monitoring and assessing potentially combustible situations and in elaborating measures to prevent armed conflicts before they ignite.

The Secretary-General could also draw upon his experience in countries like Guinea-Bissau and Liberia to set up an effective mechanism within his authority to monitor ongoing and potential conflicts, devise preventive measures and make recommendations thereon, as necessary, to the Security Council.

In this context, my Government welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Preventive Action by the Secretary-General and has continued to contribute to the Fund since its inception in 1997. We call upon other Member States who have not yet done so to make their financial and other resources available to this Fund in order to enhance the Secretary-General's capabilities to take much-needed preventive measures.

Thirdly, we believe that strengthening the international legal framework will also serve as a deterrent to future conflicts. We are encouraged by recent trends and developments in the international community to combat collectively the culture of impunity. My delegation was particularly pleased to see the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court at the Rome Conference last year. The Security Council has also set unprecedented examples by establishing ad hoc Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Along these lines, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary to consider enforcement measures to facilitate the arrest and surrender of those accused by these Tribunals.

Fourthly, my delegation, taking into consideration the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to conflict prevention, considers it very important to promote and strengthen cooperation among the Security Council, other United Nations organs and specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Equally significant in this context is the increasing importance of close cooperation and coordination between the United Nations system and regional and subregional organizations and forums such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and so forth.

Last but not least, we see that armed conflicts are too often the manifestation of unsustainable social, political or economic situations. Thus, short-term palliatives have more often than not failed to address the root causes of conflicts. The effective prevention of conflicts therefore requires that the international community devote greater resources to longer-term initiatives for development and good governance, making collective efforts to remove the root causes of conflict and promote capacity-building in countries and regions of potential conflict.

We hope the many constructive viewpoints and suggestions put forward in the course of today's debate will be reflected in one way or another in the Presidential Statement to be adopted by the Council at the end of this meeting.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my Government's strong support for and firm commitment to the common cause of preventing international armed conflicts by strengthening the role of the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular. As we stand at the cusp of a new millennium, the international community is now called upon to rise above narrow self-interest and a short-sighted world view and to seek a global, long-term common interest with a view to preventing armed conflict and building lasting peace and prosperity for all humankind.

The President: I thank the representative of the Republic of Korea for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Belarus. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus is grateful to you, Sir, for holding today's open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts.

Today the universality of local conflicts and the vulnerability of the international community to any outbreak of aggression or violence require the establishment of a reliable mechanism for preventive diplomacy.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus agrees with the conclusions contained on this in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The place and role devoted to this problem in Mr. Annan's report are commensurate with the urgency and magnitude of the item, moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Defined as a priority goal for the future development of the United Nations, this should be the basis for our subsequent work.

Although at the present time the number of armed conflicts has gone down, the nature of the conflicts is becoming ever more complex, moving away from classic stereotypes and traditional models. However, we feel that a serious analysis of recent confrontations makes it possible to collate the reasons and motives of why they arose thus making it possible to create the basis for working out a systematic approach to the preventive processes.

In our view, serious deliberation on the nature of modern armed conflicts should be the basic element in the programme for preventing wars. This will make possible the early identification of the main areas of danger in the world which could become focal points of conflict and the devising of special actions by the international community to suspend, localize and then fully halt confrontation.

An important element in preventing emerging crises is early warning. The role of the peacekeeping potential of the United Nations in this area is hard to overestimate. The peacekeeping contingents of the United Nations, military and civilian observers, United Nations missions and special representatives of the Secretary-General should become central links in this prevention. Other United Nations organs should also be involved. We believe that the interaction between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council is very important.

Of great importance in the context of a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention are measures to combat the illegal spread of small arms and weapons and to bring about demobilization and the reintegration of combatants into a peaceful life, as well as post-conflict peace-building.

Last year was particularly complicated for the Security Council from the point of view of its function in the maintenance of international peace and security. Conflicts in Kosovo, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, East Timor, Sierra Leone and other hot spots have significantly stepped up the Council's search for new ways to prevent violence and armed confrontation. However, in order to enhance the speed in reaction to a situation, the members of the Council, together with all other States Members of the United Nations, must continue their intensive search for new diplomatic measures for early warning of conflicts, based on strict compliance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Belarus supports the concept of preventive diplomacy, whose central point is the human person. People's security is the basis of the security of the entire nation and of the world as a whole. However, the concept of preserving the individual human right to security and making it an absolute principle lying beyond the sovereign borders of States cannot guarantee the required peace and security.

The history of human society is intrinsically linked with the emergence and existence of nations and States, with their inalienable attributes — their sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this context, the world community must take as a basis the primary respect for the sovereignty of a State as the only mechanism which can most effectively guarantee within the confines of its borders protection of the rights of its citizens. This is the thrust of the existing system of international law and international relations.

A new approach to questions of interference in the internal affairs of other States and attempts to bring in humanitarian principles, the defence of human rights, affecting the sovereignty of a State, in my Government's view should be carefully considered and studied by the entire world community. A proactive approach is impermissible when one State or a group of States can unilaterally, and particularly in circumvention of existing mechanisms for the maintenance of international peace and security, decide on this question.

Today, the generally recognized legal basis for the use of force is the United Nations Charter and the appropriate decisions taken by the Security Council.

The Republic of Belarus supports the proposal made by many States during the general debate at this session of the General Assembly regarding the need to discuss within the General Assembly questions of humanitarian intervention. We believe in the need for a just, fair, collective discussion, which is the fundamental basis for the work of the United Nations. In our view, the General Assembly should set up a special open-ended working group, which could institutionalize discussion and possibly work out general conclusions and recommendations on this matter.

One cannot quarrel with the axiom that prevention is better than cure. Today's discussion in the Council is an important link in the chain of building the concept of United Nations preventive diplomacy. Our job is seriously to analyse its outcome and to determine ways for moving further forward in this direction. For our part, the Republic of Belarus is prepared to take an active part in this work.

The President: I thank the representative of Belarus for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to convene this meeting to consider the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts. The importance of this issue is evident, particularly when we consider the need for the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to start making the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, as the Secretary-General stressed in his most recent report on the work of the Organization.

Conflict prevention requires a combination of broadly varying efforts, which range, for example, from early warning and preventive diplomatic actions to reconciliation between conflicting parties and rehabilitation of societies, including the reintegration of demobilized ex-soldiers, and to development and poverty eradication. To strengthen governance in the countries concerned is often vitally important for conflict prevention. So are the efforts to place the sale of small arms under control. While causes of conflict vary with the region, cooperation among the countries in the same region to build confidence in each other and to enhance a sense of mutual reassurance among them is also important to the same end.

The international community must try to make progress in these and other areas that have significant implications for conflict prevention, in order to nurture the culture of prevention. And it is the Security Council that must act to prompt and promote such efforts on the part of the members of the international community.

I want to stress here that the Council, although working with what one might call a culture of reaction, has already devised a number of measures that served the purpose of preventing the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts. The deployment of the United Nations Mission to Macedonia, for example, was effective in preventing the conflict in neighbouring Kosovo from spreading across the Macedonian border. The post-conflict peace-building activities in the Central African Republic and Sierra Leone have been working, at least so far, to prevent the recurrence of the conflicts in these countries.

Most recently, the Security Council mission to East Timor last September was effective not only in ensuring that the Security Council's debate was based on firsthand information, but also in gaining the cooperation of the Indonesian Government for the deployment of an international force to East Timor.

Needless to say, the Security Council has recourse to a number of means, such as the adoption of resolutions, the issuing of presidential statements and the holding of open debates, which, if used appropriately and in a timely manner, would also be effective in preventing the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts.

With all these factors in mind, I would like to emphasize that it is timely action that is most required of the Security Council when we consider its role with regard to conflict prevention. And it is in this context, I am sorry to say, that the record of the Council's recent actions is not one of total success.

In the case of Iraq, for example, it has now been almost a year since the United Nations Special Commission inspectors left the country, but the Security Council has so far not been able to reach a decision as to how to deal with the situation there, only to let the authority of the Council suffer. We earnestly hope that the negotiations now under way in the Council will be successful in resolving the issue as soon as possible.

On Kosovo, too, the Security Council failed initially to function effectively, to the great consternation of the international community.

Although the Security Council was able to act more quickly on East Timor, we would have welcomed an even quicker response.

Both Kosovo and East Timor need the accelerated and increased support of the international community for their rehabilitation and construction efforts in a wide range of areas, from humanitarian assistance to administration and the economy. In the context of the subject we are discussing today, we all know that the success of such efforts is essential in both cases in order to prevent the recurrence of conflicts and disorder. The Security Council can and must play a catalytic role in mustering international support for both cases.

With regard to East Timor, Japan is planning to host the first donors' conference in mid-December in Tokyo. The conference will be co-chaired by the United Nations and the World Bank, and will provide an opportunity for members of the international community to demonstrate their willingness to assist East Timor's nation-building efforts. Efforts by the Security Council to ensure continued international attention to the problems in East Timor would be very helpful for the success of the conference.

As all of us know well, the recurrence of conflicts and the prevalence of poverty are the two major issues that have been hampering the development of Africa. Conflict prevention is therefore a matter of special importance for many countries on that continent.

We have to note in this context that there are some encouraging examples of local initiatives to stop fighting. In Sierra Leone, for example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its military sub-organization, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as well as the countries in the region, have played a significant role in restoring and maintaining peace. The tireless leadership of the late President Nyerere must be recalled as a driving force for peace in the process to bring stability to Burundi. Furthermore, the efforts of the countries concerned and of the Southern African Development Community were conducive to a ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But it is obvious that African countries need much support and assistance from the developed countries in order to cease the recurrence of conflicts and engage themselves in efforts for development. And we have to admit that such support and assistance have so far not been sufficient.

Given all this, there is no doubt that stronger than ever leadership by the Security Council in focusing international attention on crises in Africa is now needed. It would be advisable for the Security Council to use African crises as test cases to develop a culture of prevention.

The culture of prevention remains yet to be developed. It is also true that the prevention of conflicts cannot be achieved by the Security Council alone. It is a task that involves other actors within the United Nations, most importantly the Secretary- General, as well as regional organizations and all the countries concerned. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the Security Council must play the central role in preventing conflicts. This is particularly true since the culture of prevention will have to be nurtured through the experiences of crisis management which the Security Council will undergo in the coming years. The Council's leadership in shifting the focus from reaction to prevention is therefore most wanted.

The President: I thank the representative of Japan for his kind words addressed to me.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting now. The Security Council will resume this meeting after the short informal consultations of the Council that will be held tomorrow, Tuesday, 30 November 1999, at 10 a.m.

The meeting was suspended at 8.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4072/Corr.1

Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish only

4072nd Meeting

Monday, 29 November 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

Corrigendum

Page 45, second column, last paragraph

The beginning of the second sentence *should read* Conflicts in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in East Timor, in Sierra Leone and in other hot spots

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

United Nations S/PV.4072 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

4072nd Meeting

Tuesday, 30 November 1999, 11.20 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Türk	(Slovenia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Fonseca
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Essonghe
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Holbrooke

Agenda

Role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts

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99-86581 (E)

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The meeting was resumed at 11.20 a.m., Tuesday, 30 November 1999.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure at the outset to convey to you, Mr. President, my appreciation for giving the States non-members of the Council the opportunity to discuss directly with the Council the issues under consideration.

The issue of the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts, which the President of the Council has chosen to consider in an open debate, is without any doubt one of the most important issues under consideration in the international arena. This question acquires a greater dimension by virtue of the nature of the subjects it raises. It is thus worthwhile to pause and consider this matter and give it the attention it deserves.

Article 1 of the United Nations Charter charges us with preventing conflicts, as this is one of the purposes of the United Nations. The authors of the Charter realized that the prevention of crises was a better and more cost-effective alternative to dealing with conflicts than confronting them after they have taken place. This is particularly true with regard to issues affecting the peace and security of peoples. The authors therefore wisely and appropriately incorporated this principle into the edifice established by the Charter without deviating from it.

In this way, the Charter requires the involvement of all major bodies of the United Nations, and not of the Security Council alone. In fact, the Charter details the role of the major bodies and conveys upon each its own competence to combat and remove the causes that threaten peace and to cooperate to solve the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems that are usually considered to be the causes of armed conflict.

For example, poverty and ignorance are usually considered to be two of the major causes of conflicts. Nevertheless, we find that dealing with these two issues and remedying them fall within the exclusive competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. If we consider the specificity of the tools available to the Security Council and the nature of its role, then we find that these two issues are far from its competence. The Council should therefore deal with these issues in the context of full respect for the delicate system of checks and balances between the major organs of the United Nations as established in the Charter, particularly the General Assembly, in addition to the other bodies within and outside the United Nations.

In accordance with Chapter VI of the Charter, the Security Council may consider any conflict or situation that may lead to international friction or that may give rise to disputes, in order to determine whether the continuation of the conflict or the situation will jeopardize the maintenance of international peace and security. In implementing this provision, the Council has a mandate to take measures to prevent such disputes and situations. Yet, its means to do so are voluntary and fall within the framework of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This requires absolute respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-intervention in their internal affairs by attempting to obtain their approval before adopting or implementing such measures. International practice stresses this interpretation of the Charter.

Chapter VII also enables the Council to assume a preventive role by calling on the parties to a conflict to take interim measures until the dispute is settled peacefully. Problems arise when the Council is either called upon or acts on its own to intervene and deal with situations within its mandate under Chapter VI by using the means provided by Chapter VII. Those Chapter VII provisions pertain to coercive and punitive measures and range from interim measures to the use of force. However, this transcends the authority of the legal system that outlines the elements under which action may be taken and the tools that may be used as established by the Charter in Chapters VI and VII. The structure of the edifice set up by the Charter is based on a careful and clear respect for the dividing line between those two Chapters.

It is therefore absolutely important that the Council's preventive intervention not cause collateral damage to the parties directly involved or to third parties whose interests are linked to one of the parties to the dispute. The Council must give the parties directly involved an opportunity to present their points of view to it before it makes recommendations or implements specific measures. We also call upon the Council to permit States that are not members of the Council and that may believe that their interests may be harmed by the Council's action to discuss the measures under consideration, in accordance with Article 31 of the Charter.

If for whatever reason the Council fails to fulfil its functions, then the only option is to resort to the General Assembly on the basis of the resolution "Uniting for peace". With regard to this resolution and the role of the General Assembly, we are astonished by the approach that has often been followed by some countries in avoiding using this resolution or in ignoring the role of the Assembly, especially since these same countries have occasionally resorted to this approach when their own interests and visions coincided or agreed with the framework of the resolution "Uniting for peace".

The Security Council's endeavours to develop its role in the prevention of conflicts so that it may change its approach from responding to crises to establishing a culture of preventive policies to deal with disputes and defuse them before they become full-fledged conflicts forces all of us here to scrutinize the issue. The Council should work in this context in accordance with the rules accepted by the international community and by all members of the United Nations, and on the basis of commonly agreed principles. We believe that in its work the Council must not take up concepts that do not enjoy full acceptance by Member States, particularly those which remain controversial. Concepts such as humanitarian intervention and humanitarian security could prove to be more harmful than useful. I do not believe that many of us have a specific definition for these and other similar concepts.

On the other hand, the Council should only adopt measures when it determines that a threat to peace exists or that an internal conflict may threaten international peace and security. It should do this in accordance with the provisions of Article 39 and with a full awareness of the serious implications of its actions if it decides to intervene by using force.

The importance of the Council's abiding by this becomes more urgent in the light of the developments that have taken place in the international arena after the end of the cold war, since many of the ongoing armed conflicts are civil wars — intra-State rather than inter-State conflicts.

This in turn raises the question of the United Nations ability to intervene to settle such conflicts. If a decision to intervene is taken, whether at the regional level through regional organizations or at the State level through the United Nations, we must then abide by certain basic elements, prominent among which are the following:

First, there should be no distinction between one region and another, or one country and another. That is to say, all must be treated equally and be accorded the same importance. Currently, this is implemented only after much hardship and pressure.

Secondly, there must be a determination to carry out the task in the face of any obstacles or challenges. Casualties, however large their number and despite their sensitive nature, should not lead to an impasse in peacekeeping operations or in controlling the situation in a specific location and in preventing further deterioration. Hence, no operation should be terminated because there have been casualties, or halted because of certain risks.

Thirdly, the behaviour and commitment of the personnel of peacekeeping forces should not be limited exclusively to upholding the directives and concepts contained in the Secretary-General's bulletin, issued at the beginning of August last, setting guidelines to the rules of international humanitarian law as it relates to peacekeeping operations, on which my delegation had certain reservations. However, this matter falls outside the scope of our discussion today.

The peacekeeping force, or its personnel, should feel that the international community is not just backing them but is also monitoring their performance. Hence any military actions undertaken against them or any threat of action against them will have its consequences. There is no doubt that the tragedy of Srebrenica is one of the elements that compels me to mention this point.

Fourthly, intervention in accordance with Chapter VI or VII of the Charter should not and must not negatively affect the territorial integrity or sovereignty of the State concerned under any circumstances. Many of the practices of the current decade involve many issues that require us to consider, inquire into and analyse their implications.

Fifthly, it is important that the Council not rush to deal with a specific situation from a specific predetermined conception that could eventually lead to serious consequences. Let us take the events that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example of what should not be repeated. The Council adopted a resolution under the pretext of halting the confrontation and restricting the ability of the combatants to continue the armed conflict. The resolution prohibited the supply of arms to the two parties despite the fact that one of the two parties — and the Council and its members were fully aware of that — had an overwhelming military superiority, which led to terrible massacres. This eventually forced the Council, after a period of inaction and flimsy pretexts, to actually intervene on an international level.

The claim that we should let conflicts run their course and be finally resolved in the interest of one party or the other, as some have repeatedly said, should not be the approach adopted by the Council.

We fully understand that what pushed the issue of the prevention of conflicts to the top of our agenda is the Council's desire to deal with the cases that have accompanied international changes. When the situation requires the intervention of the Council and the Council uses the appropriate tools within the proper constitutional and legal framework, the Council will have succeeded in fulfilling its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. I refer here to the success of the Council in dealing with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

What is alarming, however, is when the Council fails to act in matters that require its intervention, as witnessed in the events that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and others. Yet we must not forget that the Council itself was the real cause of this failure. Many of the obstacles that prevent the United Nations from taking up its role in the maintenance of international peace and security are due to shortcomings in the Council's methods of work. This is manifested in particular in the abuse of the right of the veto, or in the threat of using it, thereby impeding the work of the Council and precluding it from shouldering its responsibilities in accordance with the Charter.

Other problems are double standards, selectivity, lack of transparency and giving priority to the political considerations of Council members, particularly the permanent members, over the collective joint considerations of the members of the Council and of the United Nations as a whole. All this has led the Council to use force outside the legal framework of the Charter of the United Nations, which underlines the pressing need to reform the Council's methods of work.

Expanding the role of the Council under the pretext that the Charter is a flexible document that can always be adapted to deal with what some consider to be urgent needs related to developing situations faces some reservations on our part, and is a matter that should be handled with extreme care.

If a specific international concept is agreed upon, then amending the Charter must become one of the direct priorities of international action, and the issue should not be abandoned because of the difficulty of achieving it. Acting outside the Charter, whatever the considerations that are presented as a justification, will not necessarily lead to preventing the problems and risks that the international community faces today. In fact, it could lead to their exacerbation.

The way to achieve this is to deal not only with the problems of poverty and the need for the economic development of societies but also, and to a great extent, to reform directly the working methods of the Council that prevent it from taking effective action.

We have consistently called for regulating the use of the veto in order to ultimately limit its use to extreme cases and in accordance with objective provisions to be agreed upon.

In brief, the Council must respond to the many voices calling upon it to reform its methods of work. The Council should respond to the recommendations of the General Assembly contained in resolution 51/193, as the Council, with its 15 members, represents the will of the full membership of the United Nations in safeguarding peace and maintaining security in the world, and should bring the necessary transparency to its work, particularly its informal consultations, which occupy most of the time and the debate of the Council.

I would like to refer briefly to the important and effective role played by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We encourage him to play his role, whatever difficulties may arise, since it stems directly from the Charter. Furthermore, that role should be based on and guided by the Charter. The role of the Secretary-General has become of such great importance — perhaps it has always been so — that we must ensure that he is free from pressure. It is only logical, therefore, within the framework of reforming the United Nations and safeguarding its effectiveness, to consider limiting the Secretary-General to one term of office, although such a term might last for 10 years. In that way he — or she, as the case may be — could undertake his or her responsibilities free from pressure.

In brief, the issue before us should be included in the agendas of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, so that more detailed and comprehensive discussions in those forums can complement the beneficial initiative of the Council. The responsibilities and mandate of the Council stem from the Charter, and the implementation of the ambitious project formulated by the Secretary-General will require cooperation between the United Nations and the humanitarian protection organizations, because it exceeds the capabilities of the United Nations and the Security Council working alone.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Liechtenstein. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): We wish to thank and commend you, Mr. President, for your timely initiative to hold an open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. We fully welcome this debate as a first step in a continuing process which we hope will contribute to the enhancement of the capacities of the Council to fulfil its responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It is clear that prevention must be a key element in the work of the Council. Indeed, Article 1, paragraph 1 of the Charter mandates that "effective collective measures for the prevention ... of threats to the peace" be taken in order to achieve the goal of maintaining international peace and security.

Prevention has thus been given a key position in the conceptual framework of the maintenance of international peace and security by the founders of our Organization. At the same time, it needs to be said that in the practical work of the Council, as well as of other organs of the United Nations, it has so far played only a minor role. The past few years have brought about an increased awareness that addressing root causes must be a crucial consideration in areas such as human rights violations, refugee protection, natural disasters and others. A brutal wake-up call in connection with the importance of prevention was the genocide in Rwanda, where prevention was feasible, but inaction led to the horrific events of 1994. One impetus — maybe the decisive one — to launch the ongoing debate was given by the Secretary-General in his thought-provoking and ground-breaking report on the work of the Organization. We would like to thank the Secretary-General once again for his courage and commitment and to recall the far-reaching role that he is given under Article 99 of the Charter.

The ideas offered by the Secretary-General make it clear that prevention is important with regard not only to armed conflicts but to a wide variety of other areas; hence the call for a culture of prevention. It is of course appropriate that our debate today is focused on the prevention of armed conflicts, given the role of the Council in the area of peace and security. The context within which this debate is taking place, however, is a larger one. Prevention means acting in a timely manner in order to avoid disasters such as armed conflicts altogether, or to minimize their adverse consequences. It requires certain tools, such as effective and reliable early warning mechanisms. But first and foremost it requires political will and the readiness and willingness to realize that prevention is often the best way — sometimes even the only way — to tackle a problem. If it is carried out at an early stage and based on relevant expertise, prevention can be achieved with discretion, efficiency and at low cost. Furthermore, the disastrous consequences of armed conflicts can often be irreversible, and preventing their occurrence is thus the only way to provide effective protection to potential victims.

In the cases where the Council has taken preventive action in the past, it has been quite successful. The United Nations Preventive Deployment Force is a brilliant example of the effectiveness of preventive action and is usually hailed as the first preventive United Nations mission ever. There are, however, some other small missions mandated by the United Nations which have been operational for a long time and have had a considerable preventive effect. Prevention has also been one rationale behind the establishment of the ad hoc Tribunals by the Security Council. The most important goal of the fight against impunity is always the avoidance of the commission of further violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. International law must have an important function in the area of conflict prevention, and the Council has made a significant contribution to this end, not least by helping pave the way for the establishment of an International Criminal Court. Once operational, the International Criminal Court will have a major preventive effect worldwide. Preventive action taken by the Security Council has been selective in the past, but the success connected with these efforts should encourage the Council to expand its activities based on a preventive approach.

We would like to offer several thoughts on how to further enhance the capabilities of the United Nations in the area of the prevention of armed conflicts. The need for enhanced cooperation and coordination with regional organizations, stated many times in the past in various contexts, becomes particularly obvious in connection with the prevention of armed conflicts. It is clear that regional organizations can and should play a major role through preventive activities if their capabilities in this area are developed accordingly. Avoiding competition between their activities and those carried out by the United Nations, and adapting a pragmatic approach, must be key elements in the joint efforts in this respect.

An enhanced role of the Secretary-General seems to us a further key element of successful United Nations action in the area of prevention. Article 99 of the Charter, which I have already mentioned, gives a legally and politically sound basis for such an enhanced role. The Secretariat should be able to provide the Council with relevant early-warning information collected from various sources, including regional organizations, and with independent assessments on regions and areas where conflicts are emerging. In many cases, most of the relevant information is already available within the United Nations system, but needs to be presented in a compact and meaningful manner and in the right context.

As a final element, we believe that more work needs to be done to provide effective tools to address the root causes of such conflicts. The past few years have been marked by a sharp increase in internal armed conflicts, and tensions among communities and between communities and central governments have time and again proven to be the reasons for these conflicts. We think therefore that it is very timely and necessary for the international community to develop, and indeed to offer, tools by means of which situations of this kind can in the future be addressed more effectively and at an early stage. Liechtenstein presented ideas on the effective and flexible application of the right of self-determination quite some time ago. Those ideas are designed specifically to address such situations in a preventive and pragmatic manner; they are based on existing international law and on dialogue between the parties concerned, and can be carried out, if desirable and requested, with international involvement. This could obviously be done in a very flexible manner and within the framework not only of the United Nations, but also of other intergovernmental organizations which are seized of issues of peace and security. We very much see our ideas in this regard as an element of the ongoing process of enhancing the role of the Organization in the area of prevention.

Creating a culture of prevention is a process requiring a concerted effort by the United Nations membership as a whole, and indeed a change in our collective mindset, which is so deeply immersed in a responsive approach to crisis management. To this end, we should adopt a flexible notion of the term "prevention" comprising activities as diverse as early warning, disarmament measures and post-conflict peace-building. More often than not, prevention will be most successful if it goes almost unnoticed and is carried out with discretion and efficiency. On the one hand, this lack of limelight and headlines connected with effective prevention is probably one of the psychological obstacles which must be overcome. On the other hand, it also constitutes a major strength in that the discretion that comes with it should help overcome the reluctance of those who perceive prevention as intrusive. Collective responsibility for, and thus action on, the consequences of disasters through burden-sharing is, after all, one of the foundations upon which the United Nations is built. Prevention simply means the logical expansion of this collective responsibility to the causes of such disasters, in full accordance with the spirit and the provisions of the United Nations Charter. It seems to us that we can no longer afford not to address the causes of conflicts, and it is our hope that this debate will constitute one of the early stages in a new era of United Nations activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Liechtenstein for the kind words she addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Zambia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): My delegation is pleased to address the Security Council on this important subject: the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. Under Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council is mandated with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. This debate serves to enhance collective commitment to the pursuit of peace, stability and cooperation among nations.

The African continent has continued to provide one of the greatest challenges for the Security Council insofar as the prevalence of armed conflicts is concerned. Regrettably, this will continue to be so in the foreseeable future if the international community fails effectively to assist Africa to address the causes of armed conflict on the continent.

As many speakers indicated yesterday, in order to address conflict prevention more effectively the Security Council needs to include in its strategy early warning mechanisms, preventive diplomacy and, where possible, preventive deployment and appropriate preventive disarmament. However, as with any other exercise, the timing of those measures is critical to the success of the whole process. The experience in our part of the world, however, is that, despite effective regional efforts with respect to early warning mechanisms and preventive diplomacy, Security Council action either has come too late or has been inadequate. The example of the events prior to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 is testimony to this.

I wish now to turn to the matter of conflict situations on the African continent. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed to and prolonged many of the conflicts in Africa. My Government is concerned about the current high level of proliferation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Africa. According to recent statistics released by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, conflicts in Africa have generated more than 8 million of the roughly 22 million refugees in the world. The situation is worse when one takes into account the additional millions who are internally displaced. This stark reality indicates that armed conflicts on the African continent deserve the urgent attention of the international community.

There are clear roles for the Security Council in stopping the flow of the small arms that fuel armed conflict not only in Africa but in many other parts of the world. First, the Security Council, through the creation of appropriate mechanisms, should publicly identify private arms merchants and the zones of conflict that form the markets for their illicit arms. Exposure would constitute international condemnation and censure of these merchants of death and thereby help to stop the trade in this category of weapons. In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318), the Secretary-General was unequivocal in urging the Security Council to address this issue of the identification of international arms merchants as a matter of urgent priority. The Security Council would do well to heed the Secretary-General's advice.

The second role is that of strengthening sanctions regimes. In this respect my delegation would like once again to congratulate Ambassador Fowler, the Chairman of the Security Council sanctions Committee relative to UNITA, for breathing new life into the international sanctions against that illegal organization, which has caused so much suffering to the Angolan people and which has contributed to the destabilization of that region of Africa.

Another area that holds a distinct role for the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict is that of peacekeeping. In this area, the Security Council should as a matter of principle give equal treatment to all conflict situations regardless of the geographical location of the conflict. The Council should be seen to be fair and even-handed as it executes its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Last month the Security Council adopted resolutions establishing two peacekeeping missions, one in Sierra Leone and another in East Timor. For Sierra Leone, with an area of 71,740 square kilometres, the Security Council decided that the military component should comprise a maximum of only 6,000 military personnel, including 260 military observers. And yet in the case of East Timor, with an area of less than 5,000 square kilometres, the Council authorized a military contingent of up to 8,950 troops and up to 200 military observers. It is difficult for the Security Council to escape the perception of a double standard in the treatment of conflicts in Africa as opposed to those in other regions of the world.

In this area of preventing and halting conflict, African leaders have shown willingness to take risks for peace. They have taken initiatives to deal with threats to peace and stability on the continent. Through its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, and along with two subregional groupings — the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — the Organization of African Unity has succeeded in concluding ceasefire agreements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Sierra Leone. These initiatives, without doubt, are an indication of the determination of African leaders to search for lasting solutions to the continent's problems.

These efforts, however, are complementary and are not meant to absolve the Security Council of its responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the world, Africa included.

Having authorized a peace Mission for Sierra Leone, the Security Council now has a great opportunity to prevent the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from developing into a wider conflagration in Central Africa. As already noted, a Ceasefire Agreement is already in place and the Joint Military Commission (JMC) has begun to lay the basic infrastructure in the implementation of that Agreement. While on the subject, my delegation expresses gratitude to all those countries that have extended financial support to the Joint Military Commission. The JMC will need continued support from the international community for it to effectively carry out its responsibilities under the Lusaka Agreement.

The successful implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement offers the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours a chance to enjoy genuine peace and stability. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity. The continued support of the Security Council is therefore not only expected but imperative.

My delegation welcomes the positive steps already taken by the Council relative to United Nations deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am referring to the Security Council's approval of the deployment of up to 90 military liaison officers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, as required, to the belligerent and other neighbouring States. Zambia is, however, gravely concerned that the Security Council is not moving quickly enough to authorize the second stage of the deployment of 500 military observers. We believe very strongly that the delay is sending the wrong message to all the parties involved in the conflict. There is a real danger now that the peace process, so delicately nurtured, could unravel.

We call upon the Council to take action on the second stage of the peace process. Indeed, the third stage, involving the creation of a peacekeeping force, is itself unnecessarily being held hostage to preoccupations with demands for security guarantees. The situation on the ground demands quick action by the Security Council in order to prevent the development of a vacuum that could easily be filled by forces working against peace in the region.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest land mass area in Africa. The nature of the conflict is also complex. Africa expects that the envisaged peacekeeping force to be deployed will be of an appropriate size with a clear mandate. Such a force must be deployed under Chapter VII of the Charter, as envisaged in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. Indeed, such a peacekeeping force must be several times larger than that mandated for East Timor. We call upon the Council to summon the necessary political will to also commit the financial resources that will enable such a force to carry out its mandate.

Failure to have a clear mandate for the peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, failure to have a force strong enough to carry out the mandate and failure to deploy the force under Chapter VII will only serve to reinforce the perception that conflict in Africa does not command the same priority as that attached to hot spots elsewhere in the world.

I would like to conclude my contribution by referring once again to the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The observations and recommendations made by the Secretary-General in that report continue to be relevant. They provide ready options for the Security Council in its role of enhancing peace and security by preventing armed conflicts.

The President: I thank the representative of Zambia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Nigeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Apata (Nigeria): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the able manner in which you have presided over the affairs of the Council in the month of November.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the end of the cold war, a landmark event that brought relief from the tension which characterized the international political system in that era. In spite of the benefit of that epochal event, the decade has regrettably been marred by the proliferation and intensification of intra-State conflicts. These conflicts, although regional in character, have often threatened international peace and security. The wanton destruction of life, the acute refugee crises, the plight of displaced persons and, above all, the destabilization of regional peace and stability should compel all members of the international community to seek appropriate tools to respond adequately to these conflicts.

Nigeria regrets that Africa has a disproportionate share of these conflicts. Yet the region's capacity to effectively resolve these conflicts continues to be undermined by lack of resources and inadequate support from the international community.

The best efforts of the United Nations, which finds itself challenged by the necessity to resolve these conflicts, are usually hindered by lack of financial resources and limited knowledge and familiarity with local situations. The relative weaknesses of the United Nations on this score should be an added reason for enhanced cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Organization of African Unity.

Ideally, the concept of conflict prevention would be the most efficacious approach for the maintenance of international peace and security. In our increasingly interdependent world and in the wake of the proliferation of armed conflicts, it has become more necessary for the Council to retool existing mechanisms and design innovative early warning systems to nip in the bud situations that would lead to a breach of international peace and security. Experience has shown that the surest and certainly the most cost-effective means of maintaining international peace and security is through the vehicle of preventive diplomacy. However, for the Security Council to enhance its role in the prevention of armed conflicts, it is imperative for the parties to a dispute to demonstrate the necessary political will and for the Council to provide adequate resources to enable the United Nations to respond in a timely fashion with preventive action.

With the benefit of hindsight, we have learned, regrettably, that when preventive action is not taken or is delayed, a dispute leads to the outbreak of armed hostilities, as in the cases of Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kosovo. In this way the credibility of the United Nations is dented, at a time when more is demanded and expected of it.

Even from the point of view of relative human and material cost, prevention proves to be the prudent strategy. According to a recent estimate, the cost to the international community of the seven major conflicts in this decade, the decade of the 1990s, excluding Kosovo and East Timor, was $199 billion, in addition to the unacceptable scale of human casualties. From this example alone, the dividend from preventive diplomacy is self-evident, as it ensures fewer conflicts and lesser humanitarian catastrophes.

Conflict prevention as a major component of the maintenance of peace and security should be accorded the highest priority in the light of the monumental costs of peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building. This reality further underscores the imperative necessity of developing and fine-tuning common indicators for early warning and joint training of staff in the field of conflict prevention.

In this light, the Nigerian delegation proposes that the United Nations should establish a conflict prevention and peace-building budget, similar to the peacekeeping budget. Such a standby financial facility would ensure availability of financial resources to promptly kick-start preventive and peace-making activities.

This would be an improvement on the current situation, in which an appeal for donations has to be made before any significant progress can be recorded in the implementation of peacemaking and peace-building efforts. The current situation in Sierra Leone — where the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has to wait for a special appeal fund, which was launched in Geneva on 23 November 1999 — is a clear example. The amount so far contributed to the special appeal fund, which is expected to provide the necessary resources for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, has not been very impressive. If there were a budget in place for conflict prevention and peacemaking, there would most likely be funds available in that budget to enable the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process to get under way.

In conclusion, while Member States of the United Nations must demonstrate greater political will in the area of conflict prevention, the Security Council has a vital role to play in giving preventive action the priority it deserves as the Council discharges its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of Nigeria for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): I would like first of all to congratulate you, Sir, for arranging this open debate. The topic is a vitally important one. The question of how the international community, through collective action, can effectively prevent armed conflict has been much studied and discussed over the past decade.

We remember that at the end of January 1992 the Security Council, meeting for the first time at the level of heads of State or Government, asked the then Secretary-General to prepare recommendations on strengthening the United Nations capacity for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping. The result was "An Agenda for Peace", whose precepts were to be sorely tested in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia. Other contributors on the subject included the then Foreign Minister of Australia, Senator Gareth Evans, who put forward the idea of "cooperative security". A further substantial contribution was made in 1997 by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Among other things the Commission identified some of the chief impediments to preventive action. These included on the one hand a reluctance of countries closest to a conflict to want preventive assistance at the time when it could be most effective and, on the other hand, a certain "intervention fatigue" on the part of those States most capable of offering assistance.

Most recently we have to hand the valuable action plan offered by the Swedish Government in the pamphlet "Preventing violent conflict", written against the background of the human catastrophe in Kosovo. At the regional level, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum is doing important work on the concepts and principles of preventive diplomacy. This renewed focus and discussion, including today's open debate, is most timely, given the events of this year now almost passed and the considerable resurgence in United Nations peacekeeping.

The United Nations Charter clearly envisages a strong conflict-prevention role for this Organization. Article 1, paragraph 1, speaks of "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace". The second part of this paragraph also envisages the "adjustment or settlement" by peaceful means of "disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

The Security Council is given primary — but not exclusive — responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It exercises this responsibility on behalf of the wider membership. In Article 33 an impressive bag of tools is provided within the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes. These include "negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements", and so forth. The Security Council is also empowered, under Article 34, to investigate any dispute or situation which might give rise to a dispute that might endanger international peace and security.

The provisions of Chapter VII give the Security Council enormous powers to deal with threats to the peace or acts of aggression, and they impose serious obligations on the wider membership to assist the Council. Finally, the Secretary-General is given a particular role under Article 99, a role that would seem quite relevant to the idea of "early warning" so often mentioned in discussions of preventive diplomacy. He is able to bring any matter that in his opinion may threaten international peace and security to the attention of the Council.

The Charter, although more than half a century old, therefore contains a comprehensive, relevant and entirely practical set of options for conflict prevention, in the Articles I have referred to and elsewhere. And it empowers the Council, primarily, to use them. If the Security Council has failed to carry out its responsibilities effectively in the past, it would not seem to be a failure of system design but a consequence of other factors.

Two key factors of course are political will and resources. Member States look to the Council members to show leadership, given their special responsibilities. This includes, at the very least, timely, complete and unconditional payment of assessed contributions. It also includes a willingness on the part of Council members to ensure that the United Nations will have the wherewithal to do the job that has been mandated, whether it is sufficient troops to defend a "safe area" or money to pay for the restoration of public services in post-conflict peace-building under the Council's mandate.

There is also a view that the Council's effectiveness in conflict prevention is hindered by its working methods. The Council does so much of its work these days, perhaps 90 per cent, through informal consultations. Non-members do not have access. We are aware that among some Security Council members there is concern that this practice denies the Council the opportunity to invite representatives of States directly affected by a matter which the Council is considering to participate in substantive discussion of it. We can also envisage that there might be occasions when the chance for Council members to deliver a strong, collective and private view directly to the parties to a dispute could be a very useful step towards resolving it.

Finally there is that old incubus, the veto. As so many speakers observed during the general debate of the General Assembly, this instrument wreaked havoc on the Council's conflict-prevention capacity in 1999. It started with the untimely termination of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), a successful preventive-deployment mission in a highly sensitive area. It exerted its unwelcome influence when the Council was by-passed in the decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to bomb Yugoslavia. And it dogs the Council's efforts to arrive at a new weapons-inspection regime to replace the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), which departed Iraq before Operation Desert Fox almost a year ago.

Against these persistent negative features, which we hope can be resolved in the future, I am pleased to say that from my delegation's perspective there have also been some very positive developments in the Council's recent handling of its conflict-prevention responsibilities. Perhaps the highlight was the rapid dispatch of a mission of the Security Council to Indonesia and to East Timor in response to the violence following the popular consultation. The mission was a crucial step in helping to end the bloodshed. And we acknowledge as we have before the distinguished leadership of the Permanent Representative of Namibia. The authorization of the multinational International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) — and, subsequently, of the Transitional Administration and peacekeeping force within it — were also done by the Council as quickly as the extraordinary requirements of one member's legislature would allow.

New Zealand will remain a significant contributor to INTERFET and to the peacekeeping operation that will succeed it, we hope very soon. While we are speaking on the subject of East Timor we would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Holbrooke on his very recent personal contribution to efforts to ease the plight of East Timorese refugees in Indonesia. And, regarding a completely different theatre, we also wish to acknowledge the efforts of Ambassador Fowler, as chair of the Angola sanctions Committee, to investigate the illegal trade in diamonds and arms that has brought so much misery to that region.

While the Council has primary responsibility for international peace and security, there are other important actors within the system. There is a strong link between international peace and security, on the one hand, and disarmament and development on the other. If, as we believe the Charter intends, "international peace and security" is to mean more than the absence of war or even an absence of the threat of war, the contributions of the other organs of the United Nations, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, are of obvious importance in laying the foundations which are necessary.

Finally, there is the role of the Secretary-General's special political missions. These are typically small-scale but effective interventions, such as the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), Papua New Guinea. UNPOB and the regionally provided Peace Monitoring Group play a critical confidence-building and indeed conflict-prevention role as the parties to the dispute engage on the political issues concerned.

The Carnegie Commission, in its 1997 *Final Report* on preventing deadly conflict, wrote of the need to create a culture of prevention. This included such measures as preventive diplomacy and early warning to deal with imminent violence, and other measures, such as the promotion of well-being and justice, to deal with the root causes of violence. There can be no institution better placed than the United Nations to take on this multifaceted task. We look forward to the Security Council's continuing to carry out its key leadership role on behalf of Member States as part of this endeavour.

The President: I thank the representative of New Zealand for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Bangladesh. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): There has been express need for holding open discussions on the role of the Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. Several considerations have made this expedient. We appreciate the initiative taken in this regard by Slovenia and the wise leadership provided by you, Mr. President.

We thank the Secretary-General for the very important statement he made yesterday as we commenced this debate. His statement contains a number of specific suggestions which should receive the Council's attention, in particular the one relating to the expert working group on early warning.

The political, humanitarian and economic imperatives of conflict prevention do not require elaboration in this forum. I shall limit my observations to a few suggestions and some interrogations.

First, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is also mandated to ensure prompt and effective action. There is considerable international public opinion behind the demand that the Council be proactive and play an avant-garde role in matters of international peace and security. It is expected that the Council's role should be visible before a situation develops into a crisis; before hostile campaigns degenerate into armed conflicts; before a carnage has taken place; before a war has broken out. It should be there in the true realization of its responsibility.

The role of the regional organizations is recognized in the Charter. In recent years, these organizations have played a critically important role in preventing or containing armed conflicts. But then, the Council has been criticized for subcontracting its peace and security mission. We believe that such a perception requires our serious attention in the context of our debate today. We must examine the benefits of formulating appropriate mechanisms and elaborate policy guidelines for the involvement and intervention of the regional organizations. They must, of course, be specific to a given situation.

In this context, we encourage the initiatives of the Secretary-General in pursuing preventive action. While such traditional instruments as good offices, mediation and conciliation may be tried as the case may be, we would support more vigorous actions by the Secretary-General.

Secondly, the question of sovereignty is one with which the Council will be increasingly confronted. For us, the question would be how to balance between the principles of political independence, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and the humanitarian and legal imperatives of maintaining international peace and security. The two imperatives are not necessarily contradictory. The Charter, in my reading, tends to treat them as complementary. The task before us would be to find out the parameters of this complementarity.

There is a difference of opinion on how to address intrastate conflict which the Charter does not seem to have envisaged. What should the United Nations do with a State in civil war, a country plunged into intractable ethnic strife, a failed State? The preventive measures prescribed in Chapter VI are subject to the consent of the parties involved. What happens when the parties remain determined to fight out their claims or control? What happens when the leaders in a given State fail their people? When they violate the provisions of humanitarian law? When they disregard the recommendations of the Council?

In this context, I wonder if we should not rethink the way the question of peace and security is addressed. The responsibility of actors within States has to be determined and necessary redress should be available. The United Nations cannot keep a peace that does not exist, as the Secretary-General said. The international community cannot be expected to pay for wars of attrition fought in total disregard for law and civilized norms. A global consensus should be reached on the evolving concepts and mechanisms to address these complex situations.

Thirdly, on the question of uniformity and consistency in practice, the protection of the Security Council should be available equally to all. To be credible, the Council must be guided by a consistent approach in addressing all conflicts. To be effective, it should work on both current and potential threats to peace. To be true to its purposes and functions, it should use all the power and authority conferred upon it by the Member States.

Fourthly, on the question of delayed action, the Secretary-General's exasperation in quoting from *Hamlet* is understandable. The Council has been discredited in world public opinion in this regard. The United Nations rapid-deployment capacity should be enhanced. The Council should employ all the instruments and measures available and adopt newer and innovative strategies within the purview of the Charter provisions. The credibility of the Council must not be further compromised by its failure to act promptly, effectively and consistently. The impediments to the proper functioning of the Council should be identified, analysed and debated.

Fifthly, the Secretary-General has proposed the institution of a culture of prevention. A comprehensive approach to the prevention of conflicts may be taken through the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Success will depend on the United Nations system-wide integration of the Programme of Action and national implementation, as well as on the active participation of civil society and the media. Bangladesh believes that international peace and security can best be strengthened not by the actions of States alone, but through the inculcation of a culture of peace and non-violence in every human being and in every sphere of our activity. We regard the culture of peace as an effective expedient to minimize and prevent violence and conflict in the present-day world. My delegation strongly recommends that the culture of peace be given due consideration in the context of conflict prevention.

Finally, with respect to the role of the Council in relation to those of other major organs, it is often said that the United Nations success is more pronounced in the economic and social areas than in the field of peace and security. The Council's primary responsibility notwithstanding, its role should be seen within the broad framework of the principles and purposes of the United Nations, in which specific roles are assigned to each of the principal organs. Their contribution should converge on the goal of the common progress of mankind in a world of peace.

The multiplicity of crises and conflicts across the world in the past decades reveals a different reality. We are far from achieving our objective of building the foundation of sustainable peace. The role of the Council in conflict prevention in the medium- and long-term perspective should also be seen in this broad framework.

The human and the material price of wars should serve as pointers in our policy decisions. In today's world the narrow national-interest-centric approach to crises and conflicts is certainly anachronistic. We cannot adopt the policies of the nineteenth century in today's globalized and interdependent world.

In conclusion, I would say that giving priority to dispute resolution and conflict prevention goes to the heart of equipping the United Nations for taking its rightful place as the pre-eminent cooperative security institution in the post-cold-war era.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Senegal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I have addressed the Security Council under your presidency, Sir, I should like first to congratulate you on your assumption of your important post, and repeat my delegation's commendation of your personal commitment and the commitment of your country, Slovenia, to the attainment of the noble objectives of the United Nations Charter.

Your welcome and timely initiative to include on the Council's agenda the item we are discussing today stems from that commitment. By organizing this discussion you have sought not merely to stimulate discussion about the activity and the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security, of which prevention is an essential part, but also to create a climate conducive to improving transparency in the work of the Council, something rightly sought by many countries that are not members of the Council.

This debate arises from one of the relevant issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report (S/1998/318) on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, which was that since the establishment of the United Nations conflict prevention has been, as it remains, a source of major concern, even if circumstances have considerably changed its nature. When the idea of preventive diplomacy was introduced by a former Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, it was closely linked to the threat of a nuclear escalation between the two super-Powers. Today we must recognize that this idea of preventive diplomacy is no longer, *mutatis mutandis*, the monopoly of professional diplomats and military experts alone.

Over the years its scope has expanded considerably, following the proliferation of inter-State and domestic conflicts, which are in many respects the main causes of the destabilization of States and the causes of humanitarian disasters. Therefore, the United Nations — particularly the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — has sought to improve considerably its methods and strategies for conflict prevention.

The push towards joint coordinated action, which emerged at the end of the cold war, is gaining ground and strength at all levels: international, regional and subregional. The need to act is becoming increasingly imperative as the list of the new generation of intra-national conflicts, particularly in Africa, is growing with the ever-lengthening procession of civilian victims, refugees and displaced persons.

The painful and tragic events of Rwanda, and to a lesser extent in Somalia, have also helped make the international community more aware of the urgent need to consolidate domestic peace and to prevent the risk of violent conflict breaking out again.

In view of the emergence of new intra-State and inter-State conflicts, and given the re-emergence of old conflicts, with their aftermath of displaced persons, and the need to preserve political stability and ensure the economic development of the African continent, nothing, we feel, is more important than to focus on the prevention of conflicts in order to create the conditions for lasting peace in Africa.

However, this awareness of the need to prevent the outbreak or worsening of violent conflicts led African leaders to organize flexible mechanisms for the prevention and management of conflicts at the continental and subregional levels. African leaders increasingly believe that the international community must give substantial support to their laudable efforts to prevent African crises and that it has no choice but to react to existing crises. It is in this context that we welcome the initiative taken by Japan, which organized in January 1998, in Tokyo, a conference on preventive strategy, whose recommendations need to be revisited, pursued and amplified.

In the ongoing search for a solution to what appears to be a global threat, because peace and security are a concern and a challenge for both the South and the North, the recurrent question is whether it is possible to think today of an effective conflict-prevention policy to prevent conflicts without directly tackling other important questions intrinsically linked with it.

In his report of 13 April 1998 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General rightly recognized that the prevention of conflict was not an end in itself and that it must take into account and incorporate the various functions of peace-building and political and humanitarian activities designed to root out the underlying causes of conflict: economic destitution, social injustice and political oppression.

In this context, I wish to make the following comments.

Today we all recognize the close correlation between the need for peace and the objectives of sustainable harmonious economic development. We agree that development can only be effectively attained in an environment of peace, security and stability. Likewise, the results obtained in the development process may easily be jeopardized by instability or lack of peace. Poverty, disease, famine and oppression are still ravaging the world, as evidenced by the millions of refugees and displaced persons. These problems are both the source and the consequences of armed conflict. The attention given to them by the Security Council must not slacken, and efforts devoted to them must remain an absolute priority.

The thorny question of illicit trafficking in and increasing circulation of small arms is a challenge to us all, and we need to move beyond sterile debates about the misleading question of whether these arms are the cause or the consequence of conflicts.

In this respect, it is undeniable that today everyone agrees that the flow of weapons feeds and increases insecurity and leads to the outbreak of conflict. The increasingly systematic use of weapons causes the militarization of part of the civilian population, which ultimately creates a new equation of force between the various groups and takes them, de facto, away from the framework of negotiation. These new armed civilian actors often weaken existing institutions and pose a long-term threat to peace and stability in the regions where they operate.

Controlling, restricting and limiting the illicit trafficking in weapons is therefore a priority within the context of conflict prevention, and the international community must give special attention to this problem. Obviously the ideal approach would be to develop within the framework of the United Nations an international treaty limiting conventional arms transfers. That is why my country, Senegal, strongly supports the convening in the year 2001 of an international conference on all aspects of illicit trafficking in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

It is useful to recall here that in his "Agenda for Peace", published in January 1995, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General at that time, proposed the establishment of "micro-disarmament", based on the collection and subsequent destruction of stockpiles to prevent their reuse. In November 1998, the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States, aware of the magnitude of this scourge, decided on a moratorium on the import and export of small arms.

The third comment I would like to make is based on a logical approach. In order to prevent armed conflict, should we not establish a special fund with the sole purpose of supporting strategies of preventive diplomacy? Such a fund would finance prevention mechanisms that are already operational in various subregions of the world, rather than spending vast sums on peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building operations.

Conflict prevention has become an absolute priority for the African continent, which is paying a high price for its armed conflicts. That is why in 1993 the

Organization of African Unity (OAU) established its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which also has a Peace Fund designed precisely to finance African capacity-building for conflict prevention and settlement.

I wish to pay tribute here to the many donor countries that have lent assistance to the OAU in pursuit of this goal. I should also like to thank the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France for their commitment to African countries, under the tripartite initiative known as RECAMP, designed for swift, effective intervention in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations, as well as in emergency humanitarian relief operations. Other such initiatives will always be welcome if they remain open to any African State that wishes to participate in them.

Conflict prevention is a very complex field. It requires both the mobilization of various actors and the combination of various political, economic and social factors. It requires a comprehensive, concerted and resolute approach and the participation of the various United Nations bodies, each operating in its area of competence.

One of the major challenges to be faced in the next century and one of the key sectors where Member States must pool their ideas in order to strengthen the credibility of the Organization in the twenty-first century definitely relates to the capacity of our Organization to establish a flexible, open mechanism, responsible on a permanent basis for alerting the international community to potential crisis situations in the world and for recommending appropriate emergency measures.

At the end of this twentieth century, we must recognize ultimately that our culture of reaction to crises that shake the world must be replaced by another type of culture, one of crisis prevention. Today's discussion must help us delineate the contours of this important matter, which in our view must remain on the agenda of the Security Council.

The President: I thank the representative of Senegal for his kind words addressed to me and to my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): According to one estimate, 5.5 million people have died in war during the 1990s. Many more have had their lives ruined. The vast majority of these conflicts occur in the developing world, where many countries also have taken on a heavy burden by accepting refugees from conflicts in neighbouring nations, often without receiving due credit for their efforts. Norway has no doubt that the international community needs to pay far more attention and direct far more resources to resolving the many conflicts hampering development, creating human suffering and burdening the response capacity of developing nations, not least in Africa.

We are convinced that preventing conflicts clearly contributes to lasting and sustainable development, just as poverty alleviation and social progress may reduce the risk of war and conflicts. It goes without saying that the United Nations and the Security Council have a pivotal role to play in this regard.

I would therefore like to express Norway's appreciation, Mr. President, for your timely initiative and for the opportunity to participate in this important debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. Norway welcomes the measure of transparency and openness involved in allowing non-Council members to present their views and to inspire fresh ideas in open thematic debates like this one. We encourage the Council to further expand the practice of meeting in open formats rather than behind closed doors.

There can be no doubt about Norway's commitment to upholding the primary role and responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. The Security Council, acting on behalf of the universal membership of the United Nations, has been given the pre-eminent position and obligation to take effective and collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Early consideration and preventive action by the Security Council in disputes or potential conflict situations should thus remain the primary instrument of the international community's conflict prevention efforts as we enter a new century. The higher the readiness of the Council for preventive action, the more likely it is that disputes can be settled peacefully, in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter.

The role of the Secretary-General is vital in this regard. The Secretary-General, being provided the possibility, in Article 99 of the Charter, to bring to the attention of the Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, has a crucial early warning function in crisis situations. Norway shares the view that the preventive capacity of the Secretary-General should be strengthened further, including through the allocation of human and financial resources. To assist in this regard, Norway has contributed to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, with a total of $4 million since 1996. In addition, in the same period, Norway has also contributed some $4 million to other trust funds and activities of the United Nations Secretariat related to conflict prevention worldwide.

Preventive diplomacy and peacemaking are highly cost-effective activities for the maintenance of international peace and security. The financing of this activity should no longer be dependent on exchange rate gains, vacancy rate management and trust funds. Norway therefore welcomes the inclusion in the Programme Budget for 2000 and 2001 of funds for special political missions, which Norway considers to be of great importance.

Preventive deployment and preventive disarmament are other strategies that have proved successful in later years. Norway participated from the beginning with peacekeeping troops in the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia, the first preventive United Nations deployment mission ever. Norway supports efforts to combat the illicit proliferation of small arms and the various initiatives to curtail this lethal trade that are currently being pursued within the United Nations and elsewhere.

Norway believes in continued efforts to counter the culture of impunity for serious violations of humanitarian law. The International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia represent important new building blocks in international jurisprudence with regard to the prosecution of the most serious international crimes. The experience obtained is also a stepping stone towards the establishment of the International Criminal Court, in accordance with the Rome Statute. Norway urges all States to ratify the Rome Statute in order to ensure early establishment of the Court. The existence of a permanent, global institution of this kind will significantly enhance deterrence against the most heinous international crimes.

As current Chairman-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Norway has worked to develop further cooperation with the United Nations. Close and cooperative relations between the United Nations and regional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter is of paramount importance to successful conflict prevention internationally.

Norway has a long tradition of assisting efforts at development and poverty alleviation in developing countries, both bilaterally and through the United Nations. Furthermore, we are actively involved in efforts to provide humanitarian relief and assistance in solidarity with the victims of natural disasters, wars, and other violent conflicts. And we have been engaged in various peace and reconciliation processes in conflict areas around the world.

Increasingly, we have realized the need for an integrated approach to our peace and development efforts. Conflict prevention, humanitarian aid and development assistance must go hand in hand. We must deal with the root causes of conflict, not just the symptoms. Effective crisis management and long-term conflict prevention must include assistance in promoting lasting and sustainable development, combating poverty and relieving poor countries of their unsustainable debt burden, as well as efforts to promote democratic and economic reforms, good governance and human rights.

Norway has adopted a national strategy combining humanitarian assistance, including demining, with conflict prevention, peace and reconciliation, and development. We will be proactive in the further development of coordinated efforts. We must involve bilateral donors, multilateral organizations like the United Nations and its agencies, regional organizations, and national Governments in constructive partnerships.

Unless we can devise approaches to prevent conflicts and foster reconciliation, our development efforts will be undermined or even reversed. Building a culture of prevention is not easy. But the approach taken by the Secretary-General, notably in his report on Africa, is without doubt a most constructive way forward. Poverty, underdevelopment and violent conflicts are closely linked. We cannot address one without addressing the others.

The President: I thank the representative of Norway for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to extend to you my delegation's appreciation for taking the initiative of organizing this open debate on the very important issue of the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. We recognize and warmly commend your efforts to promote the transparency of the work of the Council.

The recent increase in the number of armed conflicts is a source of great concern for the international community as a whole. Referring to the outbreak or new eruption of numerous armed conflicts in various parts of the world in 1998, the Secretary-General, in his latest annual report, raised the possibility that a gradual but hopeful trend towards a world with fewer and less deadly wars was coming to an end. He also pointed out that the impact of wars on civilians had worsened because internal wars, now the most frequent type of armed conflict, typically take a heavier toll on civilians than inter-State wars.

Given the gravity of the situation, there is an urgent need for new emphasis on developing more effective preventive strategies, on the one hand, and improving the functioning of the existing mechanisms, on the other. Preventive actions, including fact-finding, early warning, mediation and negotiation, as well as preventive deployment and preventive disarmament, are the main short- and medium-term strategies for preventing disputes from escalating into war, and preventing earlier wars from erupting again. In the long term, however, it is crucial to reflect on ways and means of creating a world of peace by eliminating the root causes of instability through addressing effectively the problems of an economic, social and cultural character.

In this context, the responsibility of the Security Council in preventing armed conflicts continues to take on more importance in the light of the changes that have taken place since the end of the cold war and in the light of the increase in the number of armed conflicts. The role of the Council in this field needs to be considered in the framework of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, its relationship with the other organs of the United Nations, the system of collective security established by the Charter and the process of its decision-making.

The inability of the Council to address a number of key security issues in the past year is cause for deep concern. Crises in which Council action is blocked by lack of agreement among the five permanent members or in which deep divisions persist undermine the Council's effectiveness. Moreover, in the discharge of its primary responsibility, it is important that the Council react in time and that it act expeditiously in response to crisis situations. We have observed that there is sometimes a tendency on the part of the Council to allow situations to deteriorate to the point of causing great loss of life, and sometimes even large-scale humanitarian disasters.

The Council needs to build upon its experiences in the field of peace and security. Peacekeeping operations launched by the Council constitute one of those areas where we have witnessed some positive developments, including the increased and regular interaction of troop contributors with the Council on peacekeeping the subject of peacekeeping missions. However, the issue of delayed reimbursement for peacekeeping costs, as well as delays in establishing peacekeeping missions in response to crisis situations following the establishment of their appropriate mandates, needs to be addressed.

The threat of allowing financial considerations to influence decision-making on whether and how to respond to clear threats to international peace and security is a matter of great and growing concern. It can weaken the Council's authority and that of the Secretary-General in the planning and implementation of peacekeeping operations.

There is a general perception that a uniform standard is lacking in responding to the outbreak of conflicts in all parts of the world. It is disturbing that the Security Council has sometimes been too slow in responding to the conflicts in Africa and in some other areas, and too inadequate in committing itself in terms of the measures and resources it has authorized to address these problems.

For instance, in our area, the situation in Afghanistan — where violence and bloodshed have continued for years, drug cultivation and trafficking have endangered all its neighbours directly and Europe indirectly, and hundreds of thousands of people are stranded in the northern mountains without shelter or means of sustaining themselves in the treacherous early winter of Afghanistan — deserves more thorough attention from the Security Council. The problem of extremism and terrorism stemming from the Taliban is undoubtedly a very important destabilizing factor that requires a decisive response by the Security Council. However, terrorism is an anomaly of the general chaos and bloodshed in Afghanistan.

To address only the problem of terrorism would be a half-hearted and limited approach by the Security Council, and, while it might correspond to some immediate concerns of some permanent members of the Council, it would not address the larger problem for the Afghan people and for the region. The problem in Afghanistan requires a concerted and comprehensive approach by the Security Council; a piecemeal approach can hardly prove successful. It would be difficult to assume that if a problem of the nature and duration of that of Afghanistan had taken place in Europe, the Security Council would have reacted in a similar fashion.

Due to the necessity of more harmonized and effective cooperation among the principal organs of the United Nations in preventing armed conflicts, consideration should also be given to reviewing the Council's relations with other principal organs, especially the General Assembly. We believe it is essential to achieve the delicate balance enshrined in the Charter in the relationship between the Assembly and the Council. The Council should have greater accountability to the Assembly for decisions affecting the interests of all. Therefore, we would urge the Security Council, in its discharge of that primary responsibility, to be responsive to the comments and discussions in the General Assembly. Such responsiveness could secure and reinforce a healthy constitutional relationship between the two principal organs.

The Secretary-General, in his peacemaking activities and efforts aimed at minimizing and removing the causes of armed conflicts, requires the full support and cooperation of the Council. Moreover, we are of the view that the Council ought to encourage contributions by individual Member States or groups of States that have special interests in particular crisis situations, such as the various contact groups on various issues.

In our opinion, the way the Council deals with situations and makes decisions is of great importance. My delegation strongly believes in the need for the Council to obtain direct information from the parties concerned, including through their direct involvement in the discussions of the Council. The process of consultations, interactions and exchanges between the Council, the States that are directly involved in a particular issue before the Council and other concerned parties needs to be enhanced with a view to contributing to improving the decision-making process of the Council. To this end, we also support the proposal to engage the representatives of concerned States that are not members of the Council in the informal consultations of the Council.

The Council's occasional paralysis on some important issues ought to be blamed at least in part on the decision-making process in the Council. Such paralysis is injurious to the Council's credibility and effectiveness and has serious implications for the maintenance of international peace and security.

It cannot be denied that much of the impasse in, and paralysis of, the Council has to do with one aspect of its decision-making process: the use or threat of use of the veto power. That was at the core of the Council's inaction in the face of the Kosovo tragedy, which prompted the use of force without the authorization of the Council. Clearly, the issue of veto will have to be seriously reconsidered and ways found to at least manage it better, if the Council is to function effectively in preventing and dealing with armed conflicts. In this context, I wish to recall the position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which seeks to limit the exercise of the veto with a view to its eventual elimination.

The situation in Kosovo led us to reflect on the growing danger of seeing regional organizations go beyond the role envisaged for them by the Charter. Bypassing the United Nations in the use of force constitutes a serious violation of the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law, and runs counter to the status of the Security Council as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. While regional organizations have a role in peacekeeping under the Charter, this should not lead to the erosion of the Council's unique role. Therefore additional efforts need to be made to ensure that cooperation by regional organizations is in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and that the primacy of the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security is not impaired.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Haque (Pakistan): We are happy, Sir, to see you preside over this important meeting.

At the end of the cold war, people all over the world had a vision of a new international order based on justice and equity. They hoped for peace, stability and prosperity. Unfortunately, that vision is fast fading, and those hopes remain unfulfilled. In the post-cold-war era, the world continues to witness internecine and inter-State conflicts. It has witnessed cruelty, killings and massacres which only human beings are capable of and on a scale which is truly staggering.

There can therefore be no disagreement as to the necessity and urgency of minimizing the prospects of conflicts and of creating a peaceful global environment for the progress and prosperity of mankind.

The question is whether conflicts and their attendant devastation are preventable. The answer, to my mind, is that it may not be possible to prevent conflicts all the time, but, given a sufficient degree of commitment, concern, engagement, objectivity and even-handedness by the international community, most outbreaks of conflict are preventable, and the fear of an occasional failure cannot be allowed to deter the international community from its determination to free the world from the scourge of war.

Effective conflict-prevention strategies would save lives as well as the billions of dollars spent on waging war and on the rehabilitation and reconstruction required after the death, destruction and displacement caused by such conflicts. According to a recent report, the costs of the seven major wars of the 1990s were estimated at approximately $200 billion. This must really be a very conservative figure and probably does not take into account the huge human costs and the costs of reconstruction and rehabilitation, which are much more than those wasted in the actual waging of a war.

Consider for a moment the positive changes such large amounts could have brought about in the lives of millions in the developing world if these resources had been used for equitable development in conflict-prone countries and other developing nations. And most bitter is the fact that most, if not all, of these conflicts are occurring in the developing countries, destroying their economies and blighting the lives of their peoples. If peace and development are indeed indivisible, as we do not tire of reminding ourselves, the international community must bend its efforts and devote its resources to the economic development of the developing countries in order to promote international peace and prevent conflicts.

Any prescription for conflict prevention has to be multidimensional, since there are no single-cause explanations of conflicts, whether inter-State or intra-State. While in the short term preventive diplomacy and preventive deployment should be the primary areas of focus for the international community, we believe that the concept of so-called preventive disarmament must be examined with the utmost care, since such a concept could militate against the inherent right to self-defence sanctified by the Charter of the United Nations and is most likely to be applied against the small and the weak. We must also remind ourselves constantly that any strategy for conflict prevention can be durable only if it addresses the root causes and not merely the symptoms of armed conflict. It would be delusional for us to believe otherwise.

The efforts towards prevention of conflict must therefore focus on resolving fundamental problems. These could be political, economic, social, cultural or humanitarian. In this context, it is worth recalling that the areas of responsibility of the different organs of the United Nations have been clearly delimited in the Charter. The limits established by the Charter must be scrupulously adhered to and respected. While there is a need for greater coordination, there should be no attempt at encroachment. All organs of the United Nations must play mutually supportive roles, as envisaged in the Charter.

We believe that the international community must evolve a set of ground rules on conflict prevention. In our view, these rules should include the following.

First, when preventive measures are being considered, the principle of State sovereignty and non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States must be respected. However, this principle cannot and must not be extended to situations where people under colonial rule, foreign occupation or alien domination are struggling for their inalienable right to self-determination.

Second, conflict prevention must be based on the principles of collective security defined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Third, the central role of the General Assembly as the only body with universal representation in the United

Nations system must be respected and maintained. It appears that in recent years the Security Council has, at times, sought to assume jurisdiction over some of the tasks assigned to other bodies of the United Nations, or at least to set the direction for them by the simple expedient of establishing a linkage, howsoever tenuous, with international peace and security and proceeding to adopt resolutions or presidential statements on the subject. The Security Council must resist this temptation.

Fourth, unfortunately, the Security Council has not always acted on the basis of the objective requirements of a situation. It has failed, for example, to address some ongoing conflicts — conflicts with massive human suffering and systematic violations of international humanitarian law. The general impression that the Council applies different standards to conflicts in different parts of the world must not be allowed to become a general conviction.

Fifth, the Secretary-General must play his role in conformity with the responsibilities entrusted to him by the Charter, particularly in situations in which massive violations of human rights occur against people under colonial rule or foreign occupation and in which there is a threat to international peace and security. Sixth, an effective early warning system should be evolved with a view to identifying prospective conflict areas without any distinction as to geographical location or the socio-economic background or ethno-cultural identity of the people. Existing United Nations methods of gathering information should be reviewed so as to ensure that information collected is credible and non-discriminatory.

Seventh, as I said earlier, the underlying causes and not the symptoms of conflicts and disputes must be addressed. Particular attention should be paid to resolving outstanding disputes which pose a serious threat to international peace and security. The protracted conflict over the illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir by India and the denial of the right of the people of that territory to determine their own future, a problem which has remained unresolved for over 50 years and poses a serious threat to international peace and security, is one such example. The Security Council must work for the early resolution of that and other similar disputes in accordance with its own resolutions on the subject.

Eighth, all bilateral disputes between States are by definition international disputes. Any deviation from this fundamental principle of international law would be discriminatory, unjust and contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Ninth, the threats to peace and security brought to the attention of the Security Council for possible preventive action must be discussed in open meetings with the full participation of all interested parties. Tenth, the Security Council may consider preventive deployment, if required, in conflict areas, particularly in Africa, on the lines of the preventive deployment in the case of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Eleventh, the Security Council should consider the possibility of adopting preventive measures under Chapter VII of the Charter, only after all other means at the disposal of the United Nations have been exhausted and after a thorough examination of the adverse impact of such measures on the people of the targeted country, as well as on the neighbouring States. It must also devise measures to alleviate the resultant economic difficulties for the people of the affected countries. Twelfth, while cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should be improved, most such organizations can play only a limited role in the prevention of armed conflict. In any event, all actions by regional organizations must be in consonance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

The need for a coordinated effort for conflict prevention by the United Nations system is far greater now than ever before because of the complex nature of conflicts and their potential for widespread damage and destruction. The key to better management of the problems of international peace and security lies in a shared responsibility between the General Assembly, the Security Council and other organs, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. Unfortunately, on occasion the Security Council has been unwilling or unable to fulfil its responsibilities, either because of the use of the veto or because it has lacked the collective will to implement its own resolutions. This must be rectified to enhance the credibility of the Council.

We also believe that members of the international community and the Security Council must exercise great care, caution and circumspection in labelling situations as threats to international peace and security. In assessing whether certain situations require preventive measures, the distinction between crises which constitute threats to international peace and security and those which do not is of vital importance and determines which organ of the United Nations should play the lead role in their resolution. Some introspection and, thereafter, discussion, would therefore be useful on the part of all Members of the United Nations to ensure that all the main organs of the United Nations work in accordance with the specific mandates assigned to them under the Charter, with a view to ensuring peace, progress and prosperity for the peoples of the world.

Before I conclude, I should like to make one final remark on the procedure of open debates. Pakistan has participated in this debate in order to convey its views to the Security Council. I understand, however, that the Security Council has already approved a draft presidential statement on this subject which you, Mr. President, will be reading out after this meeting. Thus, the views expressed by non-members during this debate have not been taken into account. We believe that the Security Council needs to review this procedure, which reduces this debate to a sterile exercise in speech-making. We would like to suggest that informal consultations by members of the Security Council should in future be held after its meetings which are open to participation by non-members, so that the views of non-members can also be taken into consideration in the formulation of presidential statements and resolutions of the Security Council.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your effective ongoing presidency of the Security Council this current month, and to welcome this opportunity to address the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts.

Today, just a few weeks away from the third millennium, we can hardly state that one of the primary aims of this Organization — "to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war" — has been fully accomplished. Despite all of the protracted efforts of the United Nations to that end, the reported figures for casualties in armed conflicts are horrific. We continue to see mass violations of human rights, as well as economic, social and cultural devastation. Furthermore, in the current period of the post-cold war, intra-State conflicts have largely outnumbered inter-State ones.

The roots of armed conflict are numerous and complex. They can be traced to, among other things, certain historical events, existing economic and social hardship, lack of good governance and long-standing inter-ethnic and inter-religious intolerance. At the same time, there is a growing perception within the international community that armed conflicts are not unavoidable and that the costliest peace is better than the cheapest war. As the Secretary-General underlined in his 1999 report on the work of the Organization, our common challenge is to uphold the imperative of the transition from a culture of reaction to existing conflicts to a culture of prevention.

We are of the view that strengthening the commitment to a policy of conflict prevention would hardly be possible without the Security Council playing a leading role. The Council continues to bear primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

There is scepticism about the current capabilities of the Council with respect to the entire spectrum of preventive measures, from preventive diplomacy to preventive deployment and disarmament. In our view, that scepticism is surely not without foundation.

Members will recall that the evolution of United Nations peace support practice over the past decade has also highlighted the need for further development of the concept of conflict prevention. "An Agenda for Peace", submitted by the Secretary-General in 1992, and its Supplement of 1995 provided a solid theoretical basis for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, including the concept of preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. Ukraine has supported that process and has taken an active part in the work of the four sub-groups of the General Assembly's Informal Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Peace. We feel it was regrettable that the discussion in the sub-group on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking did not lead to agreement on a document on definitions, guiding principles and measures for such activities.

Ukraine believes that differences on the whole spectrum of preventive measures can be bridged. We hope that this meeting of the Security Council will give impetus to the resumption of efforts to successfully complete work on the concept and strategies of the prevention of armed conflicts. In particular, it might well be useful to define the criteria for the engagement of multilateral capacities for early warning, prevention and resolution of conflicts. Ukraine considers that, unless such criteria take account of the views of the international community, no military preventive action should be authorized by the Security Council without the consent of the State concerned. Ukraine looks forward to participating in further discussion on this subject. Clearly, the Security Council should not hesitate to employ existing mechanisms and instruments to prevent conflicts in areas of tension, including operations carried out under a preventive deployment mandate and with the consent of the State concerned.

We are pleased to note the success of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, the Organization's mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which is one of a kind in the history of the United Nations. In our view, the unique and successful experience of that mission continues to grow in importance. We are confident that the United Nations will gain through this experience in its efforts to support international peace and security.

It is of critical importance that the Security Council consider how it should deal with conflict situations in any part of the world on an equal and indiscriminate footing. In that context, particular attention should be paid to the African continent, which requires the continuous and comprehensive assistance of the United Nations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Ukraine welcomes the Security Council's increasing attention to the causes of conflicts and the promotion of peace and development in Africa. As an incoming member of the Council, Ukraine will do its best to maintain that trend.

My delegation is of the view that the Security Council would find itself in a much better position to defuse potential armed conflicts if it could rely on an enhanced United Nations rapid reaction capability. In this regard, Ukraine supports further development of the United Nations standby arrangements system and the earliest establishment of the Rapidly Deployable Mission Headquarters. This year marked five years since Ukraine declared its first military and civilian resources for United Nations standby arrangements. Over that period, Ukraine's contribution to that system has been doubled and has twice been diversified. In 1997 this work resulted in the signature of a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on Ukraine's contribution to the system in the form of personnel and facilities.

We believe also that the Security Council should encourage the Secretariat to make more active use of all available instruments to undertake in a timely manner preventive diplomatic measures such as confidence building, early warning, fact finding, good offices, mediation, citizen diplomacy and so forth. We also believe that the mechanism of special representatives or envoys of the Secretary-General should be used more often.

We also welcome the ongoing activities of the Secretariat's Department of Political Affairs, as the focal point in the United Nations system for conflict prevention, in updating the roster of eminent and qualified experts of Member States to discharge missions of conflict prevention. The process of selecting appropriate candidates to be included in the roster is now under way in my country.

There could be further thinking about using the instrument of economic sanctions as a preventive measure by the Security Council vis-à-vis conflict-prone countries, to prevent them from plunging into violence and armed conflict. At the same time, the imposition of economic sanctions should be preceded by careful consideration of potential negative consequences for third countries.

My country maintains that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the field of the prevention of armed conflicts could be intensified on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter, provided that the key role of the Security Council remains unquestioned and unchallenged.

Since 1994 Ukraine has persistently advocated the establishment of a United Nations preventive mechanism for monitoring potential sources of conflicts in order to detect and avert in a timely manner situations that would require large-scale international military interference. We are confident that this difficult and ambitious task is a very topical one for the United Nations and its Security Council. We hope that today's open debate and the presidential statement that the Council is about to adopt will contribute effectively to the implementation of that task.

The President: I thank the representative of Ukraine for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to express my deepest thanks to you, Mr. President, for your initiative to convene this open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts.

Permit me to make a number of observations on this issue, because it is at the core of the current and future situation of the United Nations in particular and of international relations in general.

First of all, the United Nations was established with the purpose of promoting the economic and social advancement of all peoples through various means, among them the prevention of war through collective measures by the States Members of the United Nations.

The essential philosophy of the Charter for achieving this goal calls for mobilizing the efforts of the United Nations to create conditions of peace that do not allow conflicts to erupt. If conflicts do erupt, they can be resolved without resort to the use of force. The Charter assigns the Security Council specific functions in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council is required to abide by this philosophy of the Charter and to use the measures prescribed by the Charter. In particular, it must be guided by the principle of the prevention of conflicts by using peaceful means and the avoidance of coercive measures, such as resort to force, and punitive measures, such as full-scale sanctions that kill civilians and destroy the fabric of societies. The Council must furthermore avoid the use of double standards or selectivity.

Second, regrettably, when viewing the Council's record in fulfilling this goal, we find that the picture is genuinely bleak. The last 10 years in particular have witnessed a serious deterioration in the credibility of the Council in its role of maintaining international peace and security.

There are two main reasons for this. One is the manipulation by the United States of the mechanisms of the Council to enforce its policies. As expressed by Mr. James Rubin, the former spokesman for the United States Secretary of State,

(spoke in English)

> "The U.N. could only do what the United States let it do".

(spoke in Arabic)

Anyone who needs proof of the hegemony of the United States over the Council need only review the positions of the Council vis-à-vis the issue of Iraq over the last 10 years, starting with the method that the United States followed to abort any peaceful resolution of the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, then the forcing of the Security Council to impose total sanctions on Iraq four days after the events of 2 August 1990, then the way the United States implemented Security Council resolution 678 (1990) by transforming it into a cover for a systematic process of military destruction of all forms of life in Iraq. Along with these practices is the pressure exerted on members of the Security Council to join in adopting or supporting the United Kingdom/Netherlands draft resolution currently being debated in the Council. That draft resolution is aimed at rewriting the previous resolutions of the Security Council. It does not bring about the lifting of sanctions, or even their suspension, and imposes on Iraq new conditions and restrictions not provided for in the previous resolutions for an undetermined period. That draft resolution paves the way for a new aggression against Iraq.

The other reason for the deterioration of the credibility of the Security Council is that some countries have circumvented the Council's mandate and have used force without specific authorization by the Council in order to intervene in the internal affairs of States, thus threatening their security, sovereignty and independence. A case in point is the use of force by the United States and the United Kingdom against Iraq since 1991 in the illegal no-fly zones, the aggressions of 1993 and 1996 and the last, expanded aggression of 16 December 1998. The latest incident of the use of brutal force was the bombardment of a primary school in northern Iraq by United States aircraft two days ago, in which 10 civilians were wounded, including 4 children.

The position of the Security Council vis-à-vis these incidents of the use of force and other incidents that are classified by the Charter as acts of aggression was completely negative: the Council has not responded in any manner whatsoever. The Secretary-General was correct to point out in this year's report on the work of the Organization that measures of force, implemented without the permission of the Council, are basically a threat to the essence of the international security system established on the basis of the United Nations Charter.

Third, these facts indicate that the real starting point for activating the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security and the prevention of conflicts is primarily the radical reform of this body. The Security Council works on behalf of all the Member States of the United Nations. It must express their will and serve as a model of democracy and transparency. The reform of the Council should be comprehensive. Its membership should be expanded and developing countries should be members of the Council in accordance with the principle of fair geographical representation. Its working methods, and particularly the decision-making process should also be reformed in a manner that fully respects the purposes and principles of the Charter in accordance with Article 24, paragraph 2. Also, the reforms should give the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice the right to hold the Council accountable for resolutions that are suspected to deviate from the principles of the Charter or for its impassivity before the violation by some States of the principles of the Charter.

Fourth, as we debate the prevention of conflicts between States and within States, a phenomenon that has spread in the last 10 years, we must first find the root causes of this problem and remedy its core instead of resorting to sedatives that have proved to be completely ineffective, if not negative.

The roots of most conflicts lie in poverty, lack of development inherited from a burdensome colonial legacy and the currently unbalanced international economic environment. The facts show that two thirds of the world's population is suffering from backwardness. A few live in prosperity and vast wealth. The world today is divided in two: the world of the rich and the world of the poor, worlds that are different in nearly every way. If we want to prevent conflicts, we need to look for a fair and balanced international economic policy that leads to greater equality between peoples and nations, reduces the level of social tensions, makes everyone a partner in building the world economy and reduces the gap between the rich and the poor. In this way we can preserve social peace within States and between States and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, bringing about a better life for all peoples. As the Secretary-General pointed out in this year's report on the work of the Organization,

> "Funds currently spent on intervention and relief could be devoted to enhancing equitable and sustainable development instead, which would further reduce the risks of war and disaster." *(A/54/1, para. 22)*

Fifth, events have proven that ignoring the principle of settling international disputes by peaceful means leads to the scourge of war. This idea is based on the principle of refraining from the use of force or the threat of its use in international relations. Within this framework, the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole must discharge their role in rejecting the old security concept, which is based on military alliances and on the stockpiling of arms — weapons of mass destruction in particular — and which thereby increases the chances of these weapons being used at any time and in any region of the world. Rather, the Council and the United Nations as a whole should encourage the alternative, new approach to security based on mutual benefits, confidence-building, equality and cooperation.

In this regard, we must do more work in the field of disarmament, in accordance with the priorities set out in 1978 by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The permanent members of the Security Council — since they are members of the nuclear club and since they have special responsibilities for international peace and security — have a role to play in accelerating disarmament efforts. It is the permanent members' duty to undertake concrete measures to achieve nuclear disarmament, as well as the dismantling of all forms of weapons of mass destruction. Until we achieve nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-weapon States should make binding commitments to the non-nuclear-weapon States, safeguarding them from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. This is particularly relevant since the safeguards discussed in Security Council resolution 984 (1995) are incapable of bringing about this goal.

Sixth, the Security Council should fulfil the obligations established in its resolutions concerning disarmament and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Operative paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 487 (1981)

> "*Calls upon* Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency".

Operative paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991), adopted in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, stipulates that those disarmament actions required of Iraq that have already been implemented,

> "represent steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction".

As of this moment, the stipulations of these two paragraphs have yet to be enforced or implemented.

The fact that the Security Council has abandoned its responsibilities, as established by its own resolutions, has engendered new risks to peace and security in the Middle East region. This is because the expansionist Israeli entity possesses every kind of weapon of mass destruction.

Seventh, when looking for ways to promote the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts, we have to be very careful as regards some concepts that are being marketed these days with the aim of abusing the mechanisms of the Security Council. Among these concepts is that of the preventive deployment of forces and that of humanitarian intervention.

The majority of United Nations Member States have opposed the latter concept because the Charter of the United Nations and international law make no provision for it; because it is alien to current norms of inter-State relations; and because of the likelihood that such a concept might be abused by those who interpret it subjectively and politically so as to justify aggression against the sovereignty of States. It would be truly deceitful to assume that we can protect human rights by means that ignore the principle of the equal sovereignty of all States.

I must state here that those who do all the talking about human rights do not have the best record in this area. For example, the United States, the leader of the so-called free world, does not guarantee the same rights to its rich and poor citizens. Despite its vast wealth, this country has more than a million homeless citizens living in such places as subway and train stations. Forty-three million of its citizens lack basic health care. The rate of child mortality among African-Americans is double that of white Americans. Furthermore, there are periodic outbreaks of ethnic conflicts and disturbances.

The United States record of violating the human rights of people outside its national borders is also well known. An example of this is how the United States, through its insistence on continuing comprehensive sanctions against Iraq, is depriving 24 million Iraqi citizens of their right to live a full life of dignity. This is genocide. In addition, the United States funds and arms a group of terrorists in order to destabilize the situation in Iraq, and it commits daily acts of aggression against Iraq.

Eighth, and finally, we believe that discussing the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts must be part of a more comprehensive discussion of the international situation. This discussion should take note of the profound changes that are occurring in the world. It should seek to establish a new political and economic world order that rejects the concept of a single super-Power and the policies of force and hegemony and military alliances. Instead, it should seek to unite the North and the South in a joint endeavour to achieve comprehensive development and to promote a world based on justice, equality, peaceful coexistence and the proper implementation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Iraq for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Croatia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): It is my distinct pleasure to thank Ambassador Danilo Türk once again for organizing this discussion in his capacity as President of the Security Council. Throughout its entire membership term, and especially as the Council President, Slovenia has proved that neither the mere size of a Member State nor its geographical location in the vicinity of a conflict or post-conflict zone precludes a Member State from making a major contribution to peace and security on the world stage.

This open debate on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts continues the successful practice of opening up the Council to non-member States, and we are grateful to Slovenia for this valuable opportunity.

In order to protect human life, we must consider every investment in building or strengthening early-warning systems, preventive disarmament, protocols and skills for the peaceful settlement of conflicts or for preventive deployment, to name just a few.

An investment in a longer-term and sustainable strategy for the prevention of conflicts calls for a comprehensive recognition, examination and understanding of and action upon a multitude of causes of contemporary threats to peace and security. What is occurring in a seemingly remote corner of the globe sooner or later becomes relevant to all of us. We all must give and take in order to protect our principal value: each and every human life on this planet. How do we do that?

The sovereign equality of States has traditionally been a cornerstone of international relations.

Interdependence makes a reduction in the sovereignty of States a rational choice. However, in reducing sovereignty, only respect for the fundamental principle of the equality of States can provide sufficiently broad support for this rational transformation of international relations.

A common curse that bedevils all prevention in any field boils down to the resistance to commit resources in advance to an invisible or underdeveloped threat. We must find a way and develop rational procedures to deal with such irrational resistances. I entirely agree with all earlier participants in this discussion who emphasized that, in international relations, investments made in prevention are the least costly.

Croatia assigns particular importance to the prevention of the recurrence of armed conflicts. This phenomenon remains closely linked both to unfinished business regarding the conflict's causes, as well as to inadequate or missing programmes for post-conflict peace-building.

Even a superficial review of several conflict and post-conflict zones of the current decade in Africa and Europe reveals the fact that preventive action is required before as well as after the conflict has arisen, when it takes the form of a post-conflict settlement. It further suggests that the commitment of the international community must be coordinated and sustained over time. It must also be comprehensive in order to address economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, each and every one of which, if left unattended, can ignite or reignite the conflict.

Two examples from our region demonstrate this very point. First, eight years following the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the succession issue of the former federal State is yet to be settled and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia still refuses to accept existing borders and the equality of all successor States. Secondly, following eight Security Council resolutions dealing exclusively with the Prevlaka issue in Croatia and eight extensions of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) mandate, the issue remains unresolved because the applicable international law lacks enforcement.

The issues of law and justice figure prominently on the agenda of intervention before and after a conflict. The ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, established by the Security Council, were designed to accomplish the extremely important mission of prosecuting war criminals and, by punishing individual perpetrators, of personalizing guilt and responsibility and assisting in post-conflict healing and the reconciliation process. A different, but complementary role has been played by truth and reconciliation commissions elsewhere. In short, the culture of preventing armed conflicts calls for serious commitment to historical demystification. This commitment can then sustain and build upon the investments of the international community in reconstruction, economic growth and development, civil society and good governance.

In this regard, within the United Nations framework, the role of the Security Council in building the culture of prevention complements that of the Economic and Social Council. Indeed, the Economic and Social Council, with its broad agenda concerning economic and social development and the eradication of poverty, remains best equipped both to identify in a timely manner the root causes of potential conflicts and voice early warnings, as well as to act pre-emptively upon these very causes of new or recurrent conflicts.

As Croatia assumes its membership in the Economic and Social Council, I would like to use this opportunity to pledge our very best efforts to focus on the prevention of the root causes of conflicts, and I call on the Security Council and its members to continue to build closer formal and informal ties with the Economic and Social Council. This may include such measures as regular joint briefings as well as occasional joint meetings of these two principal United Nations organs.

The President: I thank the representative of Croatia for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Slovenia.

The delegation of Slovenia is pleased that the Security Council has decided to undertake a systematic consideration of its role in the prevention of armed conflicts. The discussion yesterday and today has offered an impressive array of interesting and useful ideas, which will inspire the future work of the Security Council. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his thoughtful introduction and for his consistent efforts to strengthen the culture of prevention in the work of the United Nations.

The issues of the prevention of armed conflicts are not new for the United Nations. Ever since the entry into force of the United Nations Charter and the first practical steps of the Organization, the prevention of armed conflicts has been one of its primary purposes. A number of provisions in the Charter, starting with its Preamble and Article I, express the will of the United Nations to save peoples from the scourge of war and to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace. The Charter also provides a concrete normative framework for preventive strategies and action by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and, very prominently, the Secretary-General.

From a normative perspective, therefore, the prevention of armed conflicts very clearly represents a *raison d'être* of the United Nations. However, seen from the historical perspective, it becomes clear that the normative expectations and the political potential of the Organizations do not suffice. The past decades have witnessed inaction, excessive caution and blockages resulting from the prevalence of the short-term national interest. The cold-war era established a set of constraints which have gravely hampered the United Nations preventive action.

It was not surprising, therefore, that, in "An Agenda for Peace", which heralded the post-cold-war era, the former Secretary-General emphasized the importance of preventive diplomacy. The Security Council supported that approach at that time and placed particular accent on fact-finding. The practice of focusing on the role of the Secretary-General's special envoys and representatives expanded. However, the serious setbacks which affected the work of the United Nations in the first half of this decade also diminished hopes for and the potential of preventive action. In his "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace" in January 1995, the former Secretary-General voiced disappointment with the actual behaviour of States. He noted, in paragraph 28 of that report in document S/1995/1, that States collectively encourage the Secretary-General to play an active and preventive role, while individually they are often reluctant to do so when they are involved themselves. Since it is impossible to impose a change on sovereign States, the Secretary-General concluded, the solution was only a long-term one linked to an adequate climate of opinion or ethos within the international community.

The discussion yesterday and today has been an important device for the gradual creation of such an opinion or ethos. In general, the debate has reaffirmed support for a proactive, prevention-oriented Security Council. However, there have also been expressions of concern for the sovereignty of States, some of which, in my opinion, went beyond the actual needs. The United Nations and its Members must be careful not to impose limitations on preventive action, which in their final effect harm both the United Nations and its sovereign Member States. On the other hand, expressions of excessive concern cannot blur the generally supportive context of the discussion. I am particularly encouraged that the views of the members of the Security Council offered a balanced and forward-looking approach.

The draft presidential statement proposed for adoption today summed up the consensus views of the Security Council members, which reflect the will to advance a comprehensive and viable platform for action of the Security Council in the future.

In this context, I wish to underline two aspects of such a platform. The first is its clear recognition that preventive strategies and action have to be developed by all United Nations organs and agencies. This is necessary if the international community is to be effective in addressing the wide variety of causes of military conflicts. Poverty, social injustice and massive violations of human rights are among the most obvious causes of armed conflicts. They need to be addressed through appropriate international institutions. Those institutions cannot claim success if they are not able to devise policies which contribute to the elimination of poverty, prevent social disintegration and strengthen the base of implementation of human rights. This applies equally to the current conference of the World Trade Organization, as much as it applies to the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other organs and agencies in the field of human rights.

My second general remark relates more directly to the work of the Security Council, which has a special responsibility in conflict prevention. It has to be understood that the powers of the Security Council are most often used in situations of imminent armed conflict — that is, at a point of particular sensitivity and risk. In such circumstances, the States and others involved can be and often are even more reluctant to accept the intervention of the Security Council. The argument of preservation of sovereignty can be used irrationally, even with the effect of the actual endangering of sovereignty in a potential armed conflict which could have been prevented by a timely action of the Security Council.

Fortunately, there have been positive examples in the past years which have demonstrated the advantages of timely action of the Security Council, both for the prevention of armed conflicts and for the preservation of sovereignty. The case of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia is the clearest example. Macedonia has managed to preserve peace and sovereignty largely due to the timely action of the Security Council, which agreed, upon the request of the wise leadership of that country, to dispatch a preventive force to Macedonia.

Another and somewhat different example from the recent past proves the same point. The Security Council's mission to Jakarta and Dili last September clearly contributed to the prevention of a very dangerous threat of escalation of an armed conflict and helped create conditions which have eased tensions around East Timor. This has made it easier for Indonesia to pursue its own agenda of reforms, which are necessary for the preservation and enhancement of the country's sovereignty.

These and other examples speak in favour of a proactive role of the Security Council. That role should, in our opinion, include a more active use of the powers of the Security Council, such as those enshrined in Article 34 of the Charter, relating to international disputes, and those of Article 40, relating to taking provisional measures intended to prevent aggravation of a situation which already requires action by the Council under Chapter VII of the Charter.

The question of how proactive the Security Council can be and wishes to be is obviously a sensitive one. However, in pondering this question in the context of a specific situation in the future, the Council should consider carefully the distribution of roles between the Council itself, the Secretary-General and regional organizations. The Council is not strengthened in its relevance if it leaves its actual role to the others. Several speakers yesterday and today have addressed the sensitive issue of cooperation between the United Nations and various regional and subregional organizations and arrangements. A balanced approach is clearly needed. Moreover, the Security Council must seek such an approach with a full awareness of its own responsibilities under the Charter and of the need to ensure its central role by wise decision and meaningful action. In general, a proactive Council has a fair chance to be seen as a wise and meaningful Council.

In conclusion, I wish to state once again my delegation's satisfaction with this useful debate. We hope that its content and the presidential statement will successfully guide the work of the Security Council in the future.

I now resume my function as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue consideration of the item will be held immediately following the adjournment of the present meeting.

The meeting rose at 2.15 p.m.